



# *China Today*



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V K Madhavan Kutty

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# Foreword

Ever since I read his *Apakatam Ente Sahayatrikan* I have developed admiration for Shri Madhavan Kutty as a thoughtful and sensitive writer. In this volume titled *China Today* Shri Madhavan Kutty has brought to bear upon what is essentially a travelogue his thoughtfulness and sensitivity as well as his insight as an experienced journalist.

It is not easy to write about China especially after a four week's conducted tour. For any foreigner China has been and still remains a vast mystery. The barrier of language, the difficulty of communicating with the people, the highly secretive nature of the social and political systems, the lack of opportunity for an argument or debate with anyone on any subject, the mechanism of conducted tour to selected places and institutions with utter dependence on one's guide-interpreter who is invariably an authentic voice of the party or the state and a "professional friend," all these make a tour through China at once exciting and frustrating. It is however, surprising how much of China's life it is possible for an experienced and alert observer can see through the meshes of the bamboo curtain.

Within the compass of a slender volume the author has conveyed a great variety of facets of Chinese life, economics, politics and foreign relations. Cities, communes, factories, nursery schools, primary and middle schools, universities, hospitals, underground shelters, cine studies, cultural performances, shopping places etc. come to life for the reader with a few strokes of the pen together with fleeting reflections on larger internal and external policies of China. The manner in which straight narrative is interspersed with thoughts, ideas and analysis make the book lively reading.

Shri Madhavan Kutty visited China at a crucial period when the country is passing from one epoch to another. He heard the slogan of four modernizations everywhere and saw the determination of the people to achieve this goal by the end of the century. New economic policies have been formulated by the Chinese leadership in the pursuit of this grand objective. In this context he saw a new liberalization in Chinese society like the posters on the "democracy wall," introduction of western dancing etc. It is refreshing to note that the author maintains a modicum of healthy scepticism when he praises this new praiseworthy phenomenon. It may be recalled that Mao himself was the father of the concept of four modernizations and that he had envisaged China reaching the level of the advanced nations by the end of the century. He was also one of those revolutionary leaders who loved great debates and who launched the move of "let a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred schools of thought contend." But this did not prevent him from clamping down a stopper on the movement when the "blossoming and contending" tended to go against him and the system. One cannot exclude this happening in China under the new leadership notwithstanding the limited criticism of Mao that is going on now.

Having accompanied the Indian Foreign Minister to China, it is natural that Shri Madhavan Kutty has had many occasions to talk about the Sino-Indian relations. He came impressed with the friendliness of the people towards India. As one who toured China during the period of normalization in Sino-Indian relations, I cannot but confirm the accuracy of his impressions. The author's description of his visit to Kotnis Memorial in Shi Chia Chung is interesting in this context. The manner in which the Chinese are remembering Dr. Kotnis today is significant. At the same time the manner in which, at this memorial exhibition, they have chosen to forget Jawaharlal Nehru, the man who made it possible for the Medical Mission to go to China, is also worth noting. In Peking there is big exhibition on the life of Chou en Lai. It shows Chou with almost all world leaders except Nehru. Such political nuances are also remarkable though they do not necessarily detract from the sincerity of Chinese friendship towards India. Altogether this is a highly







## Preface

China today is no more a closed book as it was—at least for Indians—at the time of my visit. Today, travellers ranging from plain sight-seers and journalists to industrial consultants, World Bank agents and sociologists from all the world, tread the “Good Earth.” The quarter-century old veil of mystery has been lifted.

While for the westerner the Chinese encounter was largely an exercise in curiosity of varying shades, for an Indian who had lived through and reported the times of Sino-Indian conflict—a traumatic experience—it was an act tinged with emotion. But the new China I saw—which is described in the following pages—helped me to restructure my approaches with new and reassuring understanding. Of course my mind had been already adjusted to the geo-political realities prevailing in Asia today. Perhaps, the awakening and reaching out of the Chinese people was itself prompted by an awareness of these realities.

Looking back—since my visit took place nearly three years ago—I am, so to say, pleased to see that by and large very little of what I had said needs amendments. Perhaps it is more of a commentary on the inevitability of certain geo-political forces and their developments rather than on my judgements of them.

China today stands on the brink of yet another revolution far more significant than any she has undergone. With the pulling down of technological barriers and the pursuit of the Western connection—conducted with a businesslike and non-ideological realism that India could learn from—China is treading a new path of self-renewal. What we of the 20th century have witnessed of China is perhaps just a prelude. It will

be the reporter and surveyor of the Asian political arena of the 21st century who will find his hands full of her.

I am indebted to Mr. N. Kunju for the valuable help he rendered in the preparation of this edition. My thanks are also due to Mr. S. Ganesha Rao who did an excellent job of copy-editing this volume.

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Sometimes back, John Kenneth Galbraith then the US Ambassador to India, had made several attempts to visit China. But he had been denied a visa on one pretext or other. Once he had to return without touching the Chinese soil.

It was then the late Prime Minister Zulfikar Ali Bhutto of Pakistan had sought the help of Galbraith to get his daughter admitted into the Berkely University in USA. It was no easy task, yet Galbraith did recommend. One cannot say for certain that Galbraith's recommendation wrought the miracle but somehow she secured admission into the prestigious university. While thanking Galbraith for his help, Bhutto had asked as a courtesy if he could be of any service to him (Mr Galbraith).

At that time Pakistan and China were coming closer and Galbraith thought of taking advantage of Bhutto's offer. "Could you arrange a visit for me to China by using your good offices?" Galbraith enquired from Bhutto. Within a short time Galbraith got an invitation to visit China.

I was reminded of Galbraith's story when an opportunity to visit China came my way. Earlier, I had tried several times to get a visa to go to China despite warnings from friends that I was trying for the impossible. This did not deter either others or me from trying to visit China and have a look at the changes there. Though the Chinese have relaxed the restrictions on entry to their country, not many have had the chance to see that 'new world.'

When I applied for the visa for the first time eighteen years ago, I had no hope of getting it. It was just after the 1962 war with India and one could not expect the

an Indian into their country. Prior to the border conflict, many in this country used to sing alleluia to China and shout 'Hindi-Chini Bhai-Bhai.' But then the events of 1962 altered radically our approach towards China. Wisdom bowed down to fanaticism and geographical realities were forgotten. Some interested parties tried to instigate us against China and they were to some extent successful.

Incidentally the pen that I used then to write the glorious stories about our jawans fighting the Chinese, happened to be made in China. I didn't feel any contradiction in that, but once when I gave it to one of our top leaders to sign, his patriotism flared up and 'finished' my pen. Fearing such misguided patriotic outbursts several Chinese restaurants in India changed overnight into 'Japanese Restaurants' and 'Far Eastern Restaurants.' That was how we strengthened our defences against China after our defeat.

However, in 1970 when Chairman Mao Tse-tung had looked at our Charge-d'affaires and smiled, it gave me new hope. Soon an Indian table tennis team was invited to China. A friend and I once again applied for visas and the officials of the Chinese embassy were good enough to accept the filled-in forms. But nothing happened subsequently.

When we were returning from the Chinese Embassy, after submitting the visa forms we were followed by the police. The police escorting continued whenever we went to find out the fate of our applications. Once I asked for an explanation from the police officer following us. He replied, "We are doing our duty, but we are not doing anything unlawful." "Then why follow us?" I asked. "You may ask our seniors about it. We are only following their instructions," said the police official and continued following us. When a higher official was contacted about this police behaviour, his reply was that Indians in China too were treated in like manner. That is reciprocity in international relations!

Meanwhile, I had a chance to spend some days in Hong-kong on my way back from America. I went up to the Chinese border. My friends and I had a peep at the 'other world' of China from Lohu. Hongkong is a heaven of China-watchers and it is through Hongkong, outsiders entered China and returned. With a pair of binoculars, I saw vast rice fields and some

Chinese farmers. I then thought that was all that I would ever be able to see of China.

However, my hopes were again revived when in 1978 the Government of India decided to send a press party to China. At last after 28 years, Indian journalists were having a chance to visit China. My name was included in the first list. I was thrilled. But the list of pressmen went through a metamorphosis in the ministry and four out of the original five names were replaced by new ones. The criteria for selection had changed and party affiliations had played the decisive role.

Again in October 1979, when A.B. Vajpayee then External Affairs Minister was scheduled to visit China, it was known that some Indian journalists would be allowed to accompany him. Since the newspapers had to foot the bill, there was no necessity to wait for the mercy of officials for selection. I tried for a visa and got it. Unfortunately, on the day of departure, Vajpayee fell ill and his visit was cancelled. I pleaded with the Chinese embassy official to allow me to go. "The visa is meant to cover Mr. Vajpayee's visit," he replied formally. So that opportunity too eluded me.

However, Vajpayee was soon well and decided to go to China. I applied for the visa again and made a special request: "Could I remain in China for ten more days after Vajpayee's return, to study about China and its people?" Yes; I was allowed to extend my stay for three to five days after covering Vajpayee's visit.

Thus the visit to China depended entirely on Mr. Vajpayee's health; I was very anxious on that score till we emplaned for China. "Let him not be pestered by any physical or political diseases," I earnestly prayed. The visit to China was indeed so much important to me.

Meanwhile I tried to arm myself with all information about China. I read backgrounders and talked to several persons. Among them was a Russian who warned me about Chinese imperialist expansionism. He told me that China was trying to expand its territory and was claiming from neighbouring countries some 45 lakhs sq kilometers of land, an area bigger than that of India! I did not then remind my Russian friend that Lenin had described the treaties made with China by Western countries as "pacts between unequals." For,



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it is better to forget Lenin when one talks about border disputes with Russians.

It was the time when the Chinese Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping had just returned from a visit to America—an America beaten by the Vietnamese and compelled to retreat from South East Asia; it was now befriending China that had attacked Vietnam. The world was watching with interest the Chinese overtures to the US and the treaty signed between China and Japan. The Russians were specially suspicious of these developments.

The two communist giants—the USSR and Peoples China—were moving apart. Ideology was giving way to national interests. Expanding one's sphere of power was every one's aim. Russia and China, who had come forward to build a communist society, are giving importance to other matters. No wonder if one feels that today the real inheritors of communist ideology and Marxism-Leninism are the Naxalites—revolutionary youths of Naxalbari, Srikakulam, Kongad and Pulpally. They are the only ones who work with no motive of personal profit.

I am now reminded of an incident that occurred during my visit to the German Democratic Republic. My chauffeur was a German woman and I thanked her in Russian while getting down. "I don't like Russian," she retorted rather rudely. In Peking too I used a Russian word while talking to a Chinese friend. His reaction also was somewhat hostile: "We have a word for it in Chinese." A fierce cold wind was blowing while we were walking. My friend said "the cold wind is coming from the North." As if it was deliberately sent by the Russians! To the Chinese, all unpleasant things come from Russia. During our journey through China, we saw the magnificent bridge across the Yangtze river. We were told that Mao had swum across the river here. The guide did not deny that the bridge was built a few years ago with Russian assistance. But then the help was promised during Stalin's time!

The Chinese are not worried about the existence of capitalism and a different way of life in Formosa as long as they agreed that the island is a part of China. They claim Formosa is the twenty-ninth state of China. The Chinese

their country.

During my sojourn in China, I was eager to see and understand the ancient country which was fast changing politically, socially and economically. Very few got a chance to look at the revolution that changed the destiny of such a vast population and I was determined to make the best use of this opportunity.

Earlier I had called China as Mao's land. "Will Mao meet the fate that Stalin met in Russia?" I asked a friend who had returned from a visit to China recently. His reply was that Mao's position in China was as secure as Gandhiji's in India. Mao might be criticized, his thoughts might be revisited. But his position as the great helmsman of the Chinese revolution cannot be negated. Neither China nor the world could ever deny that he was the creator of the Chinese revolution, of a new ideology and of a new way of life.

Future historians would admit that the Mao age was as well Chou En-lai's age. I saw a copy of the monthly *Chinese Literature* in the plane that was carrying us to China. There were some twenty poems about Chou in that magazine. There had been almost a street fight in Peking between those who came to lay wreaths on Chou's mausoleum and those who opposed it. Though some people made a futile attempt to erase his role from Chinese history after his death, Chou En-lai was rehabilitated and honoured. I was specially impressed by a poem in the magazine.

*"He has no wealth, no children, no inheritors,  
no will, no urn for his ashes. But he has  
the people—the children of the land who  
will remember him for ever with love."*

When the communists under Mao Tse-tung captured power in 1949, the prospect before them was extremely bleak; for China was then in unusually bad straits. Civil war and foreign invasion had left in their wake widespread unemployment, tottering trade, stunted industry, disrupted communications, galloping inflation, swollen bureaucracy, saturated corruption and collapse of law and order. Even such age-old unifying forces as common culture, written language and no contradiction in the continuance of capitalism in a part

political traditions were in total disarray. The immensity of the problems made other nations wonder whether Mao-Tse-tung could ever succeed in his goal of uniting China and making it a strong and modern nation. Undaunted the communists set about their tasks and acted with vigour. The country that was fragmented was united and put firmly on the path of progress. Ten years hence began the age of the great leap forward. As a result, the countryside saw revolutionary changes materially and mentally. But there remained a sizable gap in the progress of agriculture and the development of industry. By the beginning of the Cultural Revolution in 1966, China rejected the Russian road to socialism.

However, the decade long cultural revolution did take China "two steps back" in many spheres. A whole generation grew without education. The scars of the wounds inflicted by the Cultural Revolution can still be seen in China. Yet, China was successful in building a society of its own through revolution, the great leap forward and the reforms. The Chinese are proud of their new social system and wish to modernize it. At present the Chinese are exploiting the immense capabilities of science and technology to achieve all round progress.

The decade long Cultural Revolution had disturbed China's march to progress. It was a period of the rule of terror. The stress now is to correct the distortions and straighten the economy. Those who were stripped of their importance during the cultural revolution, have once again come to power. It was during our visit that China had attacked Vietnam. The world was shocked and angered.

Where is now China heading to? The Western nations that used to consider China as hostile, are competing among themselves in rendering aid to that country. And the U.S.A. stands at the forefront of these nations wooing China. They have an eye on Chinese culture and ideology. It is not mere magnanimity that impels the West to help China to reach the forefront of developed nations. Every one is eagerly watching what form the modernized China will take by the middle of this decade. Where will Vice Premier Teng Hsiao ping, who had been disgraced four times and is now the cynosure of all eyes, lead China? Teng who was abused, made to wear a joker's cap and paraded in the streets once, is now the undisputed leader of

90 crores of people.

Teng has now given a new set of slogans to China. Some of them have taken the place of Mao's thoughts. In 1962, Teng had exhorted to "liberalise democracy; dilute dictatorship." "The important thing is that the cat should catch mice, not whether the cat is white or black." On this excuse, he has stamped Russians as social imperialists and has begun doing business with the West. New social, political and economic changes are going in China everywhere. Where will these changes lead the Chinese?

Our trip to China gave us an opportunity to watch from a front seat the historic changes that are taking place in that country. We saw China without Mao—a China that has corrected its course and is moving fast to modernization. Perhaps ideology is taking a backseat now. China's aims to day are a better living standard and faster economic growth. The Chinese have the determination to win. But one has to see what sort of a Chinese society will grow out of this new experiment. One cannot predict, and one should not; for, this is China. Here everything is different.

A huge hoarding "Unite and struggle to construct a modern strong socialist nation," welcomes visitors to China at Lohu Railway station. Earlier, the board used to display one of the thoughts of Mao. Now Mao's thoughts have yielded place to the new slogans of "the four modernisations."

One has to cross a bridge from Lohu to land in China. Today, many are trying to bridge the gap with that country. Even India is trying to build a small 'bridge' of her own; effort has not yielded perceptible results, but the fact remains that the two countries do strongly feel the necessity for better relations. There are many opinions as to how to bridge the gap; views differ between the two countries as well as among political circles inside India.

However, when Mr Vajpayee reached China, he asked the Chinese authorities if they would allow Indian pilgrims to visit the holy places of Manasarovar and Kailas. The bigger problems could be solved slowly, thought Vajpayee. If he could get permission from the Chinese for the Indian pilgrim's visit to the holy places, that would have made him dear to the devotees of Shiva in the North. In a way Vajpayee was playing to populism, but the Chinese were willing to consider the issue only as a part of an understanding to the bigger boundary problem. There is a story that even then the Prime Minister Morarji Desai himself had asked a visiting goodwill mission from China if they could arrange an invitation for him to China. However, the Chinese would not make any such move in haste. They could only consider the question as a part of the overall improvement of India-China relations.

Here all this shows an underlying rivalry and false pride

thwarting the betterment of our relations with China. Who should make the first move? Who would win? Everyone wants to attain something that Nehru and his daughter could not do. Nehru who had worked so much for amity among Asian nations died a disappointed man soon after the perfidious attack on India by the Chinese. Today every politician is trying for selfish ends to take advantage of that wound inflicted by China. The war was over long ago, but the wounds still remain.

When I stepped on the soil of China I did not feel that "East was red." I was rather eager to know how much the east was moving towards the west.

We had our first taste of Chinese hospitality in Hongkong itself. There we had to report to the China Travel Agency to be briefed about our tour plan. The girl at the counter knew all about each one of us. She came out and carried our luggage from the taxi to the office on the first floor. Seeing it, a friend who was a firm believer in Mao's ideology, narrated a story: A Marxist leader who visited China some time ago, had left his old pair of socks in a hotel room. No sooner did he reach India than the Chinese Embassy delivered the nicely packed socks to the leader with a polite note. There are people who say that this is all a show to impress the Indians. Whatever it might be, the Customs official at Lohu was extremely cordial. "You are friends from India. So you are exempted from Customs's check," he said. It was then I remembered an old Chinese saying. The Chinese divided foreigners into two categories. One who are above them and worthy of respect and the other below them who are considered mere beasts. They just do not see others as equals.

A few years ago, the Chinese chased an Indian diplomat on the street and abused him. Yet India had taken up the case of Chinese admission to the UN repeatedly despite the American veto against the proposal. After the revolution, when the Chinese leaders showed no eagerness to come to the international arena, it was Nehru and Krishna Menon who took them by hand to introduce them to the world forum. They were taught the *Panchseel* and were called brothers (*Bhai, Bhai*). The Western nations were suspicious when the two Asian giants were coming closer. But their anxiety changed into joy when the Asian brothers went to war. And even now there are

keep the two countries hostile

interested parties who ...  
to one another.

Before applying for a visa, a visitor to China has to declare which way he would like to enter the country. At the place of entry, the officials will be having all particulars concerning the visitor. Our tour started from Hongkong via Canton.

There was a column for the religion of the applicant on the visa form. It is not understood why communist countries like China and secular India should insist on knowing a visitor's religion. However, I did not fill in the column for religion and nobody questioned me about it.

It was reported that the Chinese allowed more religious freedom now. Though religion was not encouraged, it was neither openly discouraged. In Peking we visited a church in the morning. Only six persons were present there including the priest. The Chinese guides who accompanied us went out of the church when the service began.

There are Bibles and crosses in China, but the church bells do not ring and candles are not lighted. The real religion is Maoist ideology. Though Mao worship has somewhat become subtle now, he is still the most respected personality.

It was on a Saturday we reached Peking and the next morning we had a chance to attend church. When we asked if there was a church around, the answer was in the affirmative. But the guide said that very few had faith now. Taking us to the church he said: "You are free to go and see for yourself."

The church was located on the main street of Peking. We reached there at 9.30 a.m. "Have you come to witness service or to partake in the prayers?" Most of us preferred just to watch the goings-on.

"What church is this? Is it a Catholic one?" I asked. "In China there is only one church," the guide explained.

"Twenty years ago, all the churches were united. Of course, there are separate places of prayer for Muslims. But we people visit them."

When the service started, apart from our Indian priest, six, two Africans and seven Chinese were in the church. The priest who is in his early sixties, came in a black robe with a red ribbon around his neck. Small gold

crosses were stiched into the ribbon. The cross near the pulpit was small, some three feet long. The hall, which could seat fifty six was almost empty.

When the service began, it was almost like that in a Catholic church. The psalms were sung to the accompaniment of the piano. The seven Chinese present joined the priest in singing.

The Chinese who attended the prayers were mostly middle aged. There was a young woman too among them. It was evident that there was no bar for attending the church. No one looked down upon them, neither were they suspected of being outside the 'mainstream' of Chinese society.

However, one cannot say for sure if the churches and priests would survive after the old generation passes away. Since the existence of the churches depended on the faithful, their future seemed to be rather bleak.

While handing over the tickets and other documents to proceed to China, the official at Hongkong had warned me: "Be careful. Someone may plant some incriminating substance in your box without your knowledge. It may lead you into trouble." Though such fears are prevalent among people in Hongkong, the relation between the British colony and the Chinese mainland are quite cordial. I remember someone saying that the British Governor of Hongkong used to be virtually the Viceroy of China.

While waiting at the Lohu Railway station for the train to Canton, I noticed the new flow of tourists into China. There has been a rush of visitors since China slightly opened its doors to outsiders. It was the Americans who took advantage of the travel liberalization by China; in six months some 15,000 American tourists had visited China. Apart from the enthusiasm to see places, they had plenty of money to burn.

The visitors reached in groups and they were taken on tour also in groups. Except for distinguished guests, tourists in China are not allowed to go alone on sightseeing. It is easy to take people on conducted tours if they come in groups and the expense of providing separate interpreters and guides could be saved. As it is, there are not many interpreters in China to cater to individual tourists. Also it is easier to arrange travel programmes, hotel accommodation and trans-



interested parties who want to keep the two countries hostile to one another.

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port if the tourists move in groups.

In China, the cost of the tour is not charged separately—rooms, food, interpreter services, transport, laundering, are all charged for together. As in other countries, you cannot rent a room in a hotel and take a taxi to go and see places.

There are only about a lakh cars in the whole of China and these are under the control of the Government. The tourists can demand for a taxi from the hotel, but cannot get one from a stand or in the street. The taxi drivers refuse cash, instead, they are given 'vouchers' by the tourist guides. Buses and minibuses are also available but these are arranged by the China Travel Agency. The Agency calculates the total expense of your stay in China and you pay the amount. No bills or receipts are given. As there is no income-tax, one need not worry about evading taxes, so bills and receipts are unnecessary in China.

The government provides interpreters and other service personnel for the foreigners residing in China. Though the State receives a handsome amount for these services, the employees are paid only according to the normal salary scale prevailing in China. "My interpreter and driver are not paid even one fourth of what is charged from me," complained a Russian journalist. "Yet they look at me with suspicion."

Different types of visitors reach China. They are grouped according to nationality: groups of visitors from different countries and groups of overseas Chinese from Hongkong, Taiwan and other places. It is not known if all are treated alike. However, there are special hotels for overseas Chinese who come to visit their 'motherland.' The authorities watch with interest those Chinese who are citizens of other countries and bring with them the cultures and ways of life of the alien nations. China seems to view these cultures with suspicion and do not favour their 'import.' Also the authorities are apprehensive of the natives being attracted by alien cultures.

The grouping of visitors was evident in the train too. Travel by train is quite comfortable in China. There are two classes—soft and hard. The 'soft' class has better facilities than the Indian air-conditioned First class. Only guests and officials on duty travel by this class. Others go by 'Hard' class. In our compartment, except for the Indian journalists,

all others were Americans. And the adjacent compartment too was occupied by Americans.

The West has been trying to isolate China all these years. For the past thirty years no one wanted to have anything to do with China. Now the changing China is attracting the Westerners. Also they are interested in the political and social tumult that are sure byproducts of the change. Perhaps their desire is to fish in the troubled waters. There were some World Bank officials among the Americans. Is it not strange that the World Bank is now fervently trying to 'discover' China?

It was while we were in China, the Chinese troops attacked little Vietnam. Earlier Vietnam had brought, Kampuchea under its control. But behind China and Vietnam, there are big powers rendering moral and material support for aggression.

I tried to discern the silent 'incursion' of the US into the Chinese life and culture. It is doubtful if anyone will ever be able to influence the shrewd and stoic Chinese. However this period of history is crucial to China and is worth watching carefully.

There are several factors that make the situation complex. The inestimable national pride of the Chinese, their impatience for modernization and their determination to teach several others, including Russia, a lesson!—All these I could feel in the air during my tour of that vast country.

In Canton, the Chinese foreign Ministry officials received us. They did not waste time on pleasantries and formalities because the Indian journalists had come only for a few days' visit. They straightaway began talking politics.

The Chinese officials explained that the 'small misunderstanding' in 1962 (The Chinese Foreign Minister too used the phrase when he spoke at a dinner hosted by him in honour of Vajpayee) was caused by Russians. They contended that it was the counter-revolutionary Khrushchev who misguided the great and virtuous Nehru. Now, as then, it was the Russians who were trying to prevent India and China coming nearer. They gave us in a very short time a historical interpretation to the unsavoury past.

The fact that it was the Western countries who had instigated India and China to fight in 1962, and the same forces are now behind the reconciliation efforts, are not relevant to the Chinese, for they are basically practical. The Chinese political stand and analysis of events are always different. They are guided only by their self-interest. Enmity and friendship are all part of furthering their national interest. In China, politically everyone speaks the same language. The phrases, clichés and quotes are all the same throughout the country.

Even the Communist Party Marxist (CPM), though it had justified many of the Chinese policies, later began criticizing the Chinese leadership for its adventurist programmes. The only party that accepted the Chinese attack on Vietnam was the Communist Party of India, Marxist Leninist (CPI-ML). But the CPI (ML) itself is fragmented into groups following Lin Piao, Liu Shao Chi and other Chinese theoreticians.

When the Communist movements enter into the boundaries of nations their outlook narrows down into nationalism; they are bound to dilute ideology and international proletarianism. Chinese communism is a typical example of communist-socialist struggles turning into national movements. It is creative and not imitative, and its lessons are worth studying.

It was in a British *Trident* we had flown to China and travelled inside the country. China mostly uses British and Russian made aircraft for passenger transport. The Russian planes do not fly on important routes now. It may not take long for American Boeings to oust both the British and the Russian planes. The Chinese, who have no aircraft industry at present, consider American planes as the best and have already signed the necessary agreements to buy them. Anyhow travel by air in China was quite comfortable.

There is a life-size marble statue of Mao in the reception room of the Peking airport. But the thoughts of Mao now seem to be outdated. China has yet to gain many things and the Chinese are determined to gain them. To Mao, the means were as important as the end and should be revolutionary. Today's leaders give importance to the ends; it is doubtful if the path they take to reach it is Mao's. Even the word 'revolution' is losing importance now-a-days. Is it becoming another *Mantra* of a bygone era?

Peking city is some thirty kilometre away from the Airport. There are dense walls of trees on both sides of the road to the city so that one cannot see anything beyond. Visitors are naturally prone to suspect this as the 'bamboo' curtain. But on reaching the hotel one finds the suspicion is unfounded. "You can go anywhere you like," said the interpreter.

Language is a problem for outsiders. When written, Chinese is the same throughout China; but when spoken, it has a number of dialects such as Mandarin, Cantonese etc. Yet without minding the language and the bitter cold, several visitors began their China *Darshan* then and there.

The Chinese go to bed early. There is practically no night life in China—no cabarets, clubs or bars. The only sign of life in the streets after sun set is that of that of people returning home from work. They also rise up early. The Chinese time is some 2½ hours ahead of Indian time. Yet I woke up before

sun-rise. (Here too the sun rises in the East!) Looking out, I could not find the usual sky-scrapers and the hurrying crowd that are a part of city life. Thousands of people of serious mien flowed along the streets on bicycles and foot in silence to work. It is evident that they have grasped fully Mao's saying ; "Revolution and production are not dinner parties," A look into the streets of Peking can convince anybody that it is the capital of an egalitarian country, of a people who are determined to establish a classless society. One cannot find the rush and noise of western cities; instead one is struck by the determination and silence in Peking, a silence that is somewhat intriguing. The most noteworthy feature of the modern Chinese city is the absence of glitter and excitement and the presence of 'an unmistakable austerity.'

Peking does not give the impression that it is the capital of an affluent nation, though, excepting for brief periods, it has been the capital of China for centuries. Old houses and dwellings of poor families are plenty there. Except the main roads, the other streets are not pompous or majestic. However, the city is a model for able organization, cleanliness and hard work.

A terrible earthquake had devastated a large part of the city three years ago but the indomitable Chinese rebuilt their homes with unprecedented perseverance. Because of the large population, the problem of housing shortage is acute. Usually a family of five has two rooms and shares a community kitchen and bath with others.

Peking presents a unique scene of crowded, yet silent city. The workers who return home after work, the long orderly queues at bus stops, the uniformed children marching to their schools, the few cars that move stealthily among a sea of cycles—all make Peking very different from any other metropolis in the world.

There are 30 lakh—bicycles for the 90 lakh people living in the city. Since no one has a car of his own, all people travel by cycles or buses. The senior officials who cannot receive us, cycled for 40 minutes to reach their office. I the cyclists were to sound their bells, the noise would be deafening. But Peking had no problem of noise pollution because most of the cycles did not have a bell or light.

repair outfits do not disfigure the main street because such facilities are located in the bylanes.

China produces three types of cars, all of them Russian models. The factories for making these cars were constructed with Russian aid. But now there were Japanese and German minibuses and cars on the streets. It may not be long when China will make cars in collaboration with Western countries. Japan too has an eye on the Chinese market.

In fact Japan is a tough rival to the US in China. It is not for the love of China, the Japanese industrialists are wooing China. Neither do they believe in the Chinese ideology nor have they any hope of turning China into a capitalist country. The motive of Japanese friendship, is to defeat the US in the Chinese market. Is it not a pity that India is neglecting such a vast market for its goods? With an economy that depends upon exports and foreign exchange, India could have very much benefitted by trade with China.

We were told to be ready early morning for our tour. The Chinese were eager to make the best use of the tourists' time. The daily schedule was busy and the programmes began early. The next day after reaching Peking, I went for an early morning stroll so as to return to the hotel by 7-30 A.M. I had not even that vague feeling one experiences when pursued; for, nobody followed me.

The avenue trees planted on both sides of every road in China looked like a thick wall. In China planting of trees was no formal ritual like *Vanamahotsava* in India; the Chinese loved trees and they saw to it that the ones they planted really grew up.

No one loitered on the roads. All were serious and were in a hurry to reach their workplace. Neither morning newspapers nor *poojas* to deities stole anyone's time. Few seemed interested in national and international news and no one appeared eager to read newspapers. Evidently they were aware that whatever they needed to know would be informed by the authorities. And more news will reach slowly through 'Peoples Daily.' Slowly, I say because even the hot news is printed in the *Peoples Daily* only three or four days after its happening.

On the roadside, people did for physical exercises callisthenics as if they were rehearsing for a ballet. Even elderly men



can be seen practising Tai Chi Ch'uan, a form of unarmed self-defence. Chinese physical exercise has got its own charm and specially the sword dancing exercise attracts a crowd. Though anthropologically, the Chinese are a race of short people, the new generation is comparatively taller, the reason for which can be better food and physical exercise. In our hotel, there was a helper (no one calls them bearer or waiter in China; they are all proud workers, and not menials) who was 6 ft 2 inches. Premier Hua Kuo-feng too is quite tall. Though they may look passive, the Chinese are generally very energetic.

In China, all people wear the same type of clothes made of coarse cotton and consisting of a tunic or jacket which is buttoned to the neck and wide trousers. Women are also similarly attired. It may be a bit monotonous to see men and women wearing the same drab dress. Chinese women do not brassiers. But this has nothing to do with the new "top-movement." "We don't have the tradition of wearing make-up and ornaments. They consider jewellery and make-up are for tribals, not for modern people. Black hair, dark eyes and flat nose are peculiarities of the Mongolian race, but there are many beautiful men and women among them. "The daughters of China on their march along the revolutionary paths, do not wear silk and satin, but rough uniform" said Mao. True to his words, all wear blue or gray trousers and shirts. There were no brandnames or tailor's marks on the clothes. People wear the same dress to go to work and to attend parties.

The girls have now started plaiting their hair. During the cultural revolution, women were not allowed to grow long hair. Now seeing the length of some women's hair, one can very well calculate when the cultural revolution came to an end. The soldier's uniform of an olive green colour with splashes of red has no mark of rank. Pips, bars and stick are not part of Chinese military dress. Ranks have been abolished in Chinese army. All are soldiers. However, it is said that the number of shirt pockets reveal the status of the soldiers. There are men with two, three or four shirt pockets. Those vested with authority are known as responsible persons. "Apart from

spruce traffic police, the soldiers are the most smartly dressed class in China.

Food was sold from a vehicle parked on the roadside. An old woman walked pushing a wooden pram. Seeing the primitiveness of the pram, one could see that modernization was still a distant goal for the Chinese. Of course, Peking has also a showplace market—the People's Market—for the edification of foreign visitors.

There were no teenagers revelling on the streets. But in the cover of darkness young couples sat in parks laughing and kissing. Walking inside the famous Beihai park in Peking, one could find that human nature was no different in China than in the permissive West. The young are alike everywhere. Their blood was warm not only with revolution but also with emotion. And other people never disturbed them in their pleasurable pursuits.

Chinese names are poetic and pleasant to hear. "lake that reflects three moons," "gateway to heaven," "the treasure house of emeralds"—are some of the names of places. The girls are named after flowers in China too, as elsewhere.

Seeing the sights of Peking, we reached in front of the famous "Gateway of Heavenly Peace." The Parliament House called "The Great Hall of People," was nearby. It is a show-piece of post 'liberation' architecture covering an area of over 500,000 square feet; it contains a banquet hall for 5000 people and a theatre to seat 10,000 people, besides a number of smaller rooms. The exterior is decorated with Neoclassic columns and cornices. The National party congresses are held here. The T'ien-an-men square is bigger than New Delhi's Vijay Chowk or Moscow's Red Square; political meetings and parades are held here. Sometimes political encounters also took place in this square. There had occurred one such between the liberals and extremists when Chou En-lai died. The 'gang of four' was in power then and it was reluctant to show respect to Chou. But youngsters filled the place with flowers as a mark of honour to the departed leader. The flowers were promptly removed by the enraged authorities, but more flowers appeared. At last, the 'flower people' won the war of wreaths.

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Like Lenin's body in Moscow and Ho's in Hanoi, Mao's body too is preserved in Peking. But we could not see the body. The Chinese authorities said that the mausoleum was under repair. But the journalists from the West claimed that Mao's body itself was under repair! One cannot say for sure whether the mausoleum will ever be opened to the public after 'repair.'

There were huge oil paintings of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin, the leaders of world communist movement, on the walls of the square. In China, they are the undisputed leaders; the dispute is only about the leaders who came after them.

Wall posters are found practically everywhere in China. Because of their ubiquity people say that democracy in China is limited to writing on the wall. Even this, some believe, is a farce enacted with the connivance of the authorities. However; one cannot disregard the enthusiasm and interest the Chinese show in expressing their opinion through writing on walls. It is a social phenomenon worth studying. The Chinese people, the Government and the Party as well as the world outside do take note of the 'writing on the wall' particularly those on the 'democracy wall' adjacent to the government secretariat in Peking.

The posters pasted on the wall always provide topics for discussion. They focus on contemporary events and political developments. This naturally provokes discussion. Many people come to gaze at these posters, for these are the only safety valves for the suppressed dissidence of the people. Further some of them are eye-catching, clever and colourful.

Once there was a call to let "a hundred flowers bloom and a hundred thoughts flower." But it did not yield any perceptible result. Anyhow, there is a special place in the political life of China for the democracy walls. Sometimes one can discern the new thinking of the authorities from the posters pasted on the walls. Perhaps these might be feelers to know if the common man approved their policies and how far the government could go in implementing them.

There was no 'wall' democracy even during the cultural revolution. But now the opinions of the people get free expression at least on these walls. People enjoy the right to write big character posters according to (article 45, chapter 3) of

the constitution adopted on 5th March, 1978. It is said that the posters against Mao were the handiwork of the present authorities and also that those against the government were pasted by the followers of the gang of four. Anyway, it is something unique for a communist government to allow dissent even though it is addressed to a very limited audience. The message of the posters are taken note of by the people and also the authorities.

Some posters are a pointer to future events. The US Embassy has detailed a person who goes on a motorbike everyday to report about new posters appearing on the democracy wall. The foreign correspondents depend more on the 'writings on the wall' than on official briefings, for their reports and political commentaries. Posters proclaiming "Long live China-Israel friendship" appeared when China decided to teach Vietnam a lesson. The Janata victory of 1977 in India was reflected on the walls. The posters have dared to criticize Mao and some of his precepts and described the commune as a primitive concept of society. To some extent, the Chinese have been able to express their free thought through the posters.

I once asked the Chinese officials accompanying us if any new posters had appeared on the wall. (Instead of asking what was the latest news, the visitors to China enquire if any new posters had come up). "I do not read them," replied the official curtly. He was a responsible person and could not indulge in such un-partylike activities. However, the common people in China read them and exchange opinions with the visiting foreigners. The Chinese youth are definitely interested in the posters and they make up a vast majority. Even below the age of eighteen there are 40 crores!

Another noteworthy trend in China is their sudden love for learning English. It has almost become a fashion to study English, which is being taught not only in schools but also in factories and hotels. There are English teaching programmes on the radio and Television. People are eager to study English even during their off days because they consider knowledge of English as essential for modernization. Some study English so that they can have rapport with other countries. Several English teachers are being trained; many are brought from outside China and

Chinese are sent abroad for higher English education. "Won't English education make the Chinese familiar with the ways of the West and be attracted by them?", I queried.

"Yes, the hazard is there, but considering the advantage of studying English, it is insignificant," contented a Chinese Official.

The talk in China everywhere now is about the havoc wrought by the cultural revolution and about the necessity of modernization. It was written on the board in a Primary school: "study well for modernization of the country." The theme of the slogan on the wall of the ceramic factory was also the same: "Bring modernization for increasing production."

Wherever a visitor goes, he is compelled to hear about the disastrous results of the cultural revolution. The leaders of the cultural revolution had almost ruined the country. A generation has been deprived of education and these young people are a big problem for the government today. When the official accompanying us was asked when he had taken his degree, he shamefacedly replied that he had only to sign the answer papers to pass the examination during the cultural revolution. But even if you asked why a particular road was in such bad shape, the answer would be that it was the result of the cultural revolution. The intention is to impress upon people the bad effects of the cultural revolution through constant repetition and reminders.

During the years of cultural revolution, universities were closed down, and students and teachers were sent to the villages to do manual work. It was said that higher education had no relevance to the country's march to communism. Those who had knowledge of the great Chinese tradition would be reminded of the first emperor of China, Ch'in Shih Huang-ti (221—210 B.C.) who had destroyed some 460 educational institutions and burnt all books except such useful texts as those on agriculture, medicine and divination. He was also the builder of the Great Wall. He had also massacred some twenty members of the royal family, who protested against his materialist revolution.

Today the perpetrators of the cultural revolution are being denigrated, if not liquidated. The cultural revolution was the brainchild of those who wanted to please and misguide an



aging Mao. It had been turned into a ritual by Mao-worshipping fanatics. God who was discarded after the 'liberation,' was reincarnated as Mao. No one was allowed to question his divinity or go into the dialectics of his personal glorification. Through the cultural revolution, they intended to evolve an unquestionable autocracy.

The urban Chinese do not have the habit of reading newspapers in the morning. The newspaper reaches late but that does not make it less popular. The news in the papers are limited and presented in a subtle way. The newspapers all over the world gave an eight-column banner headline when Chinese troops entered Vietnam, but the *Peoples Daily* printed only a four-line report.—“Because of the Vietnamese provocation, Chinese troops have entered Vietnam with a limited objective.” After two days another report appeared. “The farmers have begun sowing grain in their land on the Chinese side of the Vietnam border.” It meant life had become normal. The people need not know anything more. Their attention from work should not be diverted. Those who were entrusted with the defence of the country would do their job; others need not worry about it. When the war became fierce and world opinion turned against China, the authorities asked people not to listen to foreign broadcasts. All obeyed. Not many were interested to hear foreign broadcasts in secrecy. The rural Chinese hardly bother about newspapers. They are satisfied with the handwritten or mimeographed wall posters displayed on their commune notice boards.

The Chinese do not make a hue and cry about family planning; they implement it efficiently. The age of marriage is 28 for men and 25 for women. They could have two children (now it is restricted to one) with a spacing of four years between. The authorities decided that these norms were in the best interest of the country and the people and nobody questioned them. No one was compelled to undergo operations. The population of China in 1953 (census) was 583 millions, in 1968 it was 711 millions and now it is 908 millions. In a couple of years, China may hit the 1000 million mark. The birth rate has receded, so has the death rate, and hence population explosion is still a threat to the country.

The speciality of Chinese food is its colour, aroma and

taste. The way the food is served on the table—be it a pig's ear, fish's tongue or a piece of snake—is most attractive and tempts even vegetarians to taste it. Official banquets in China are famous for their variety. There were more than 20 items in the dinner party given in our honour. Chinese culinary art had transformed several types of birds, beasts, snakes and even moss into delicious dishes. Some of those who eagerly extended their plate withdrew in horror when the ingredients were mentioned. There were snakes and dogs transformed into tasty food. These were choice delicacies, served only on rare and special occasions. In Canton, there was a place where dogs were reared for food, as we have piggeries and poultry farms. As it is, the Chinese get enough to eat. Their diet varies from place to place and consists of rice, barley soup, corn meal and bread. Few can afford eggs, mutton and fruits. The Chinese do not keep dogs or birds as pets.

There are differences of opinion among political leaders in China too. The friction between top leaders sometimes comes to surface. It is said that opinions of the Premier and the Vice Premier differed on the action against Vietnam. However, the wishes of the Vice Premier prevailed. In fact, the two top leaders have diametrically opposite background. Prime Minister Hua Kuo-feng was on the forefront of the cultural revolution while Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping had been branded then a capitalist-roader. Teng is supposed to be the most powerful leader in China. The world is watching eagerly where, this short man who gazes quizzically with one eye wide open and the other half closed will lead China. Many people think that China's future is safe in the hands of Teng, the firm protagonist of modernism and a trusted disciple of Chou En-lai. However, there are a few who suspiciously view the ways or modernization.

Prime Minister Hua Kuo-feng is also the Communist Party Chairman. His pictures are there in every school and he is praised everywhere. One is reminded of the kings of old to whose glory people used to sing songs. China is no more a kingdom. It is claimed that there is no personality cult. However, personalities are still worshipped as kings of old.

China's urban areas are among the most thickly populated places of the world. Of the 50 most populated cities of the

world, China has 13. But the Chinese cities do not have the rush and tension of Western cities. Unlike in New York or Chicago, life is peaceful and orderly in Peking. Here few people depend on psychiatrists and sedatives to keep themselves sane.

We were accommodated in a fairly good hotel in Peking. There are very few hotels in China and they are not comparable with the five-star hotels in India. There are no foam-rubber cushions on bed; mosquito nets are rare. In China, there are no chewing gum, tips, head waiters, credit cards and many other 'luxuries.' But the hotel workers are extremely courteous; the food is good and to cap it all there is the age-old tradition of Chinese hospitality.

Some Western films have begun entering China. When we were there, Charli Chaplin's "Modern Time" was being shown in a theatre. Several others were expected. The Chinese are interested to know what they can get from outside; and outsiders are interested in what they can sell to China.

Like other capitals, Peking too has its share of mausoleums, museums, old palaces and treasure houses of art. There are "wonders of the word" built with the blood and sweat of millions of slaves.

A 'summer palace' (I Ho Yuan) adjoining the lake K'un-ming built for the Empress Dowager Tzu-hsi of the Ch'ing dynasty, is a great tourist attraction in Peking. Like the Great wall of China, this too can be classified as one of the wonders of the world. It is said that the Empress Dowager had used all the money allotted to develop Chinese naval fleet for the construction of the palace. During the period of the cultural revolution, parts of the summer palace and the art items inside were destroyed, perhaps to wipe out memories of the disastrous naval defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894. Many of the invaluable precious stones had already been looted by the British long ago.

The popular tourist spot in Peking is the Ming city founded by Emperor Yung-lo (1403-1424), the third ruler of the Ming dynasty. It is built in the form of two rectangles planned on axes governed by the four cardinal points. The northern rectangle encloses the 'Forbidden City' with its Gate of Heavenly Peace, Wu-men bridge, Gate of the Midday Sun, Imperial apartments and Halls of Supreme Harmony (T'ai-ho-tien) and

Military Prowess (Wu-Ying-tien). The southern rectangle contains the Temple of Heaven complex (T'ien T'an) originally built in 1530-40 and later restored twice, once in 1749 and again recently. This complex includes the round Altar of Heaven, the Imperial Heavenly Vault—a single storey building with a dazzling blue-tiled roof on and Hall of Prayer for Good Harvests.

Between the two is the T'ien-an-men square, the nerve center of Peking and the People's Republic of China. The communists have carted away enough imperial structures to create a 98-acre space where popular demonstration and ceremonial parades are held. They have also built the Museum of History and Revolution and the Great Hall of the People on the east and west of the square. A huge monument to the Heroes occupies the middle of the square.

the sky and pierced by a flat cloud. This cloud element uses elements similar to the motifs of the Temple of Heaven gateway. This is a distinctive image and also the solitary symbol of the imperial past. What is amazing about this column is the way in which it mingles with the new images of communist iconography.

The original colour of the wall of the structures in the Forbidden city and the Temple of Heaven complex is a purple red. The same colour is maintained even today. It is said the Chinese of the Imperial age considered the colour purple red as auspicious because of its association with the pole star. Perhaps this colour is an indication of the ambitious nature of the policies of Chinese rulers—be they emperors or chairmen.

However, more than the cruel legends of the ancient Chinese tradition, the slogans of modernization and the anti-Russian, Pro-US policies, some other matters are worthy of thoughtful consideration when one evaluates New China which has 'miles to go and promises to keep' But here is a country where the difference between man and man is minimum. There are no five-star elite and people living below the poverty line. The efforts to establish an egalitarian society is noteworthy, if not worth emulating.

"We are not a rich nation," a Chinese official told us. "Ours is a poor toilers' country. But everyone shares the riches of the land. You may please write only the facts you find here."

I stayed in China for few weeks. These officials, who were always with us during the period, never had food from our hotel. At meal time, they left us. "We cannot afford to have the food supplied to our honoured guests," they said. They were particular not to waste government money even when they had the chance to do so.

Krushchev once said that "in China a plate of rice and a pair of trousers are shared by two." That was a typical Krushchevian hyperbole and the Chinese will never forgive Krushchev for that. A new society based on material equality is being established in China. One can see the continuing and determined march of the Chinese people towards that lofty goal.

It is hard to believe that protest demonstrations, poster pasting and pamphleteering against the authorities are going on in a Communist country. Even if these happenings are proved through evidence, cynics tend to dismiss them as prompted and provoked by the authorities themselves. However, it is not only in Peking, 'the wall of democracy' has come up. In many other communist countries also dissidence has come to the surface in several forms.

There were organized protests against some of the party programmes and policies in Shanghai some months ago. Not only the protestors were not liquidated but also their demands were considered. It is evident that criticism of the government, though not encouraged to grow, is allowed in a subtle form in today's China. Recently there have been demands for liberalizing the administration and for full guarantee of human rights.

The Democracy Wall recently was pasted with many posters against the commune system that was designed by Mao to bring about social and cultural revolution in the countryside. When the criticism of the communes continued incessantly and finally turned into an attack on Mao himself, the authorities called a halt. The *Peoples Daily* pointed out that the poster campaign was crossing the boundaries of accepted norms. Though the posters have now disappeared from the wall, their message still hangs heavy in the air and discussions on the subject go on. The future of the communes, once considered the bed-rock of Chinese economy and administrative decentralization, is now uncertain.

After liberating the country from the Chiang clique, Mao discovered a great revolutionary force lying dormant in the

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I stayed in China for few weeks. These officials, who were always with us during the period, never had food from our hotel. At meal time, they left us. "We cannot afford to have the food supplied to our honoured guests," they said. They were particular not to waste government money even when they had the chance to do so.

Krushchev once said that "in China a plate of rice and a pair of trousers are shared by two." That was a typical Krushchevian hyperbole and the Chinese will never forgive Krushchev for that. A new society based on material equality is being established in China. One can see the continuing and determined march of the Chinese people towards that lofty goal.

It is hard to believe that protest demonstrations, poster pasting and pamphleteering against the authorities are going on in a Communist country. Even if these happenings are proved through evidence, cynics tend to dismiss them as prompted and provoked by the authorities themselves. However, it is not only in Peking, 'the wall of democracy' has come up. In many other communist countries also dissidence has come to the surface in several forms.

There were organized protests against some of the party programmes and policies in Shanghai some months ago. Not only the protestors were not liquidated but also their demands were considered. It is evident that criticism of the government, though not encouraged to grow, is allowed in a subtle form in today's China. Recently there have been demands for liberalizing the administration and for full guarantee of human rights.

The Democracy Wall recently was pasted with many posters against the commune system that was designed by Mao to bring about social and cultural revolution in the countryside. When the criticism of the communes continued incessantly and finally turned into an attack on Mao himself, the authorities called a halt. The *Peoples Daily* pointed out that the poster campaign was crossing the boundaries of accepted norms. Though the posters have now disappeared from the wall, their message still hangs heavy in the air and discussions on the subject go on. The future of the communes, once considered the bed-rock of Chinese economy and administrative decentralization, is now uncertain.

After liberating the country from the Chiang clique, Mao discovered a great revolutionary force lying dormant in the



large mass of rural Chinese. He believed that the progress of China was linked with the organized force of the proletariat of the countryside. To Mao, development of the villages was synonymous with the progress of Chinese economy.

"Can we do away with the excessive power concentrated in the administration?" Mao once asked. "Yes," he answered the question himself. "But not at once, because today in our country still exist vestiges of the forces of imperialism, counter revolution and class differences. Our immediate objective is to strengthen people's rule, specially the people's army, the judiciary and the police. We have to consolidate our gains through strengthening our national defence and ensuring peoples' interests."

To a great extent, China has been successful in bridging the gap between classes, if not in establishing a classless society. The old bureaucracy has given way to a new administrative set up. Yet there are forces of counter-revolution lurking in the corners. Though much is talked about the rural force, real power is still centralized. This has helped the evolution of a strong people's army in China. Since it is for the party to decide what is good for the people, decentralization of power still remains an unfulfilled dream of Mao.

In spite of the controversy centred on the commune, it is a must in the itinerary of visitors to China. It is as important to the visitor as the great wall is to the Chinese. Many visitors to China have written about the commune, some praising it and some criticizing it.

The basic political philosophy of Chinese life is to be self-reliant; life and progress depending on their own production.

While stressing the need for self-reliance in production, Mao also advocated the necessity of having social institutions to keep pace with economic progress. However the social institutions have grown at a much faster pace than the rural-oriented economy, and the result of this unequal development giving rise to contradictions and criticism.

However, it is noteworthy that China was able to develop a village-oriented egalitarian social system and economy within the past two decades. Though statistics could be exaggerations and official briefings have to be taken with a pinch of salt, there is no doubt that the commune system was mainly

instrumental in making the backward and most populous country in the world self-sufficient in food.

Gandhiji had seen India's future in *Gram Swaraj*. But Indians have almost forgotten the idea of *Gram Swaraj*. So Gandhi's dream of *Gram Swaraj* was shattered and rural development in India remains a distant goal.

In China, after liberation, the communes had come up spontaneously and not as a revolutionary programme for developing the villages. Mao and his colleagues had turned their attention to the villages because they thought that socialism could not succeed unless the countryside was brought under the total control of the state. This 'back to the villages' programme was not merely because of Mao's eagerness to bring about rapid progress to the country but also to establish his own 'place' in the destiny and history of China.

After liberation large farms were broken up and combined as agricultural producers cooperatives in all parts of the country. In 1951, there were only 30 such cooperatives in China, but by 1954 their members shot up to 6,70,000. But the peasants were not happy with the developments. The murmurs of the farmers dampened the enthusiasm of some of the top leaders for the cooperatives. However, Mao was determined to carry out the rural revolution to its logical end of bringing the whole of China under the cooperative system.

It was when he was evolving a plan to form new cooperatives and extend the system to new areas, Mao heard of a new experiment in Honan province where many agricultural co-operatives, the handicraft, supply and marketing and credit cooperatives, local communist Youth League and Women's Association had merged with the local government to work together. Immediately he went there to see the working of the system. Mao was convinced that the system worked better and he named it commune. After four months of discovering this spontaneous commue, the Communist Party of China formulated a programme to form communes all over the country. It was a decisive step towards China's independent march to socialism, discarding the Soviet road of state-controlled co-operative system. The new path China adopted towards progress was found most suitable for a developing agrarian country and became a model to other Asian nations. However, if the com-

munes failed there could be new experiments and new slogans based on the very precepts and thoughts of Mao. For, Mao had said that he too was subject to correction and this saying could be used to quote Mao to negate Maoism.

The communes are denigrated by Western media as the 'bastard child of the Chinese revolution,' later legitimized by Mao. But today the commune has become a framework for the creation of a new social system based on a economic and political relationship that goes beyond the selfish ambit of relations and neighbours and embraces a whole self-reliant community.

From the very beginning, the commune was criticized as fit only for a primitive community and not at all suitable for the highly, cultured Chinese society. Some described it as a petty bourgeois religious madness. However, only the communes were subject to criticism, not the power and popularity of Mao. Mao protected the communes as they were his power base. Now, after Mao's death, the communes are facing more intense criticism. Will the communes be finally discarded like the cooperatives earlier for a better system?

The craze for modernization and the resultant massive heavy investments in industry are also under criticism and the authorities are compelled to re-evaluate their plans. It is said that the Chinese are now reluctant to sign with Japan several economic agreements that were drafted earlier and have gone back on some agreements signed with the USA. Since the Chinese leaders know that development has to be based on present economic realities, a leap into unrestricted modernization is not expected and therefore, the communes are not likely to be discarded in the near future.

"Seventy crores of Chinese live and work in communes that are the very base of the Chinese economy and state power," explained Madam Wen who took us to the Yuyu Wan Tan commune located half an hour's drive away from Peking. She gave a detailed lecture on the working of a commune, between several cups of tea. "Now let us go around to see the nursery school, the farmers' dwellings farms and industrial estate," she invited us.

In every peasant home, there was a picture of Mao receiving Chou En-lai on his return from Moscow after

attending the 20th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party. Chou, who had strongly criticized the Russians and given them a piece of Chinese mind, much to the delight of Mao, who gave him a hero's welcome in China.

The Yuyu Wan Tan commune enclosed an area of 33 square kilometers and had a small industrial centre, office, rice fields, vegetable farms and several big orchards yielding a variety of fruits. Some 11,000 persons were engaged in farming and the commune had 95 trucks and 17 tractors.

We saw men and women working in the fields, sowing, reaping and weeding. They were almost like Indian peasants, the only difference being that they were neither barebodied nor barefooted.

It is said that the Chinese tend to exaggerate their statistics of production. This is perhaps a legacy of the "Great Leap Forward." Though contradictions can be found in the official figures none can deny the notable increase in production. The determination to overcome difficulties and go ahead is evident in every sphere of Chinese life.

"Last year this commune produced 40 million kilograms of vegetables. We sold 8000 pigs and 30,000 chicken. The value of the total production was 26 million Yuan (a Yuan is around Rs. 5/-) and the profit was 4.6 million Yuan. The profit is used for expansion of facilities and welfare measures."

The communes have their own small-scale industries to augment their profits. Agricultural implements, cement, paper etc. are manufactured by these industrial units. Their production processes are old and traditional. There are not many machines but they keep several people employed.

The average yearly income of the members of the commune is 250 Yuan. Earlier it was only 150 Yuan. The living standard of the people has steadily improved with the increase in production. The workers of the commune are grouped into 16 production brigades. The commune has now a hospital and several clinics. It has 51 nursery and five kindergartens schools.

Men and women work alike and get equal pay for equal work. Women retire at 55 and men at 60 years of age. After retirement all get a pension of 25 Yuan.

"Comparing to the developed countries, we may yet be

lagging behind. But we are making rapid progress. Last year some 50 television sets were bought for the common use of the commune members. We could have bought more, but television sets are in short supply in the market. Today several families have television sets of their own."

"The communes are based on collective production and administration," said Madame Wen. It works on three levels: Commune, production brigade and production team. A revolutionary committee of 31 supervised the work. This committee is under the District Communist Party. The committee meets twice a month and reports to the members once in six months. The committee members are elected for three years. There are only 670 communist party members in this commune."

Wages are paid according to "work points," which are calculated on the basis of the quantity produced, and a point fetches 1.60 Yuan. The work point for each job is fixed by the production brigade and team. Some production teams evaluate work points for each day. Though wages are paid every month, accounts are settled only at the end of the year. A part of the profits are paid as bonus to the members in proportion to their total work points.

"The wages are not fabulous. Yet it is enough for us to buy good food and clothes," said the representative of the commune. Most of them have wrist-watches and bicycles. All have houses. The Chinese worker's first wish is to buy a bicycle, then a transistor radio. A camera comes under luxury.

We visited a worker's house. It was a two-room set with enough facilities. The old-type fire place was used to heat the rooms. There were pictures of Mao and old calendars on the wall. The house was clean and tidy and its owner was contented. He had a kitchen garden which fetched him some extra income. His wife was away on work and the children were attending nursery school. He did not consider his life as monotonous. There was a cinema theatre in the commune and cultural shows were held once a while.

"Can the children go out of the commune to seek employment when they grow up?" One of the visitors asked. Those who finish their studies in middle school are given employment in the commune itself. Those who go for higher education can

seek jobs outside. During the period of Cultural Revolution, no one used to go for higher education. Last year, a hundred candidates appeared in competitive tests for higher education and were selected.

The commune system has brought about radical changes in the mental outlook of the common man. They are today more conscious about protecting the property of the state than caring for private possessions. Cooperation and mutual help have a prominent place in the social character. Women are no more confined to the drudgery of domestic work. It was the worker's wife who received us in a house. Her husband was busy preparing dinner in the kitchen.

While returning from the visit to the commune "I remembered Mao's words. "Study about agriculture from Tachai and about industry from Thachung." Tachai and Thachung were the two models. It seemed that these communes were the two models. It seemed that the communes that were instrumental in the reconstruction of the Chinese society may imbibe the ideas of modernization, but would retain its original broad framework. New thoughts and slogans might replace the old but their base would continue to be the communes; for they have become deep-rooted and a way of life in China.

"We have very much reduced the difference between the affluent and the poor. China will never see again a society in which the rich become richer and the poor, poorer. We have the largest population in the world and they have hands used to hard work. Also we have plenty of natural resources. What we require to raise our standard of living now, is only some more technical know-how. Visit China again after five years. We will be in the forefront of developed nations," the official who guided us said with confidence. And I did not feel he was boasting.

The predominant slogan today in China is about modernization. Posters proclaim it everywhere. Everyone, from the leaders to the common man, talks about modernization. Wherever we went, Peking, Shanghai and all other parts of China, the slogans of modernization resounded in the air. Coming out of the trauma of a decade-long Cultural Revolution, China is going full-blast for modernization. Industry, education and

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sure to change beyond recognition. China has started on its long march to be the most modern socialist nation by the end of this century. The liquidation of the 'Gang of four,' that blocked all ways to progress and had closed down universities and colleges, marked the beginning of this march. There are doubts if China could reconcile its ideology with the new policy of rapid development. "We know how to protect our ideology and at the same time go ahead with modernization. We do not find any contradiction between the two" said Teng Hsiao-Ping, the father of China's modernization.

Today there are handcarts on Peking streets. In the fields, workers stand in line with sickles in hand harvesting rice. Perhaps, better implements could have produced a better crop. The harvesting could have been faster. The Chinese have now started thinking on these lines and mechanization of agriculture is in the offing. In a socialist country there is no unemployment and starvation because the right to work is guaranteed by the constitution. However, technological advancement to increase production is necessary for progress and prosperity. With the increase in production, the condition of the worker will be improved, he will get better education, the nation's defence will become stronger and progress will be reflected in every phase of national activity. This urge for modernization has led China to seek technological assistance from the US and other capitalist countries.

In a country like China, where everything is under state ownership, improving production is important for success. Some say that use of modern methods for increasing production may lead to capitalism. But they are the same people who consider socialism synonymous with poverty. They forget that it is essential for an agricultural country to acquire advanced technology for making rapid economic progress.

There are doubting Thomases who are cynical about China's programme of modernization. Many socialist countries including the Soviet Union are sceptical about the path chosen by China. Can a developing country like China come upto the level of industrialized nations within this century? A visitor to China can easily be convinced that China is capable of attaining that goal. Some years ago, Russia quarrelled with China and withdrew its economic aid and technical

advisors. But that did not deter China from its path. The Chinese have been able to come up in all those spheres where Russia had withdrawn its support.

Modernization does not simply mean using new technology and machines. Prime Minister Hud Kuo-Feng says that it is necessary to eradicate outmoded technology, managerial inefficiency, low productivity and inferior quality of products from all spheres. China is now trying to introduce modern accounting and managerial expertise into its industrial establishments. Calculators and other electronic implements are being increasingly used. These are mostly of Japanese or American make. Though China has exploded its first atomic bomb in 1964, its first hydrogen bomb in 1967; fired its first guided missile with a nuclear warhead in 1966 and launched its first space satellite in 1970, it is backward in the production of consumer items. Modernization plans envisage production of more consumer goods and items of 'com fort.'

China has made rapid progress in increasing industrial and agricultural production. In 1977 industrial production rose up by more than 14 per cent of that of the previous year. The first 6 months of 1978 saw an increase of 24% than those of 1977.

All the 26,500 communes in China have begun their programme of modernization. New technology in agriculture as well as industry is being introduced to increase production and the efforts are paying rich dividends. China has agreed to allow foreign capital in such vital sectors as oil exploration, steel, coal production etc.

There are plans to mechanize 85 per cent of the farming activities. China has few modern farm machinery, such as tractors or harvesters. Farmers depend mostly on manpower and animals. Production of tractors has increased by 32 per cent. Chemical fertilizers, now under production, is fast replacing traditional fertilizers such as animal manure and human waste.

In a socialist society, the benefit of increased production should reach the worker. In China, the living standard of the worker has definitely improved after the progressive implementation of modernization programmes.

In short, China is today marching along the path of modernization.

nization holding fast to its socialist values.

Huge pictures of Mao and posters carrying his thoughts can be seen everywhere in China even today. China-watchers wonder how long these will last. Everyone who returns from China, is asked this question.

There is a grand mausoleum built to the memory of Mao in the famous T'ien-an-men Square. Facing it are huge portraits of Marx, Engels, Lenin and Stalin. The question is, will Mao be devalued in China as Stalin in Russia.

It is a fact that the policies and programmes evolved by Mao have been altered. But even when Mao was being corrected, the new leaders used to quote Mao; for Mao had said "Except the new-born babes and the dead, everyone is liable to commit mistakes." It means Mao is not infallible.

The new long march of China, based on the four principles of modernization, is against the precepts of Mao. The brain behind modernization, Vice Premier Teng once said: 'Only such teachings of Mao that be useful for us in the present circumstances will be followed.' For, Mao himself had exhorted to search for truth through experiments. "More than my philosophy, it is the peoples' revolutionary experience that becomes the scale to measure truth", he had said. Giving importance to these thoughts of Mao, as interpreted by the Western observers, is evidence for Mao being slowly phased out of the Chinese political scene.

However not only Mao is not criticized publicly in China, but he is still often quoted. The Official guides and interpreters often mention the greatness of Mao. However the revaluation of Mao has started from the top and the people are noticing it.

The present Chinese leaders would say that Mao was no great economist or philosopher. But the contribution of Mao towards the Chinese revolution and consolidation of China as a great nation can never be forgotten by the people. So even those who criticize Mao, are careful not to hurt popular feelings.

It is this fear of Mao's popularity that deters the present leaders from blaming the 'Gang of four' for all the crimes of the Cultural Revolution. The gang is made responsible for

all the mistakes of Mao in the last ten years of his life. The tirade against the 'Gang of four' goes on uninterrupted in universities, communes, factories and fields. It is said the gang was the cause of blocking China's progress. What was Mao doing then? He was too old and in ill health and the gang did many things without his knowledge. However, the leadership knows that Mao had blessed the gang of four in all its endeavours but they are afraid to pull down the 'God' of millions from his pedestal.

Earlier some posters denigrating Mao and others supporting him had appeared. Now, both have disappeared and replaced by slogans of 'modernization.'

In Russia, Stalin's photos and statues have been removed long ago. But in China Mao's images are still there. Even if Mao's policies are corrected, his charisma cannot be harmed because Mao dead is no less powerful than Mao alive; for his role in not only shaping China's history, but also in developing world communism, can not be erased from the pages of World History. So disregarding a few of his tenets need not mean his denigration. In short, negation of Mao is nothing short of depriving the Chinese revolution of its father figure.

The government and the Communist Party publish hundreds of dailies and many weeklies so that newspapers can reach all Chinese who can read. As the rural areas do not get these papers, mimeographed and handwritten newspapers are circulated there.

In Peking, we visited the offices of Jen Min Jin Pao (*People's Daily*). The paper is as old as the Chinese Revolution and reflects the official news of the communist party and the government. Some 65 lakh copies of the (*People's Daily*) are printed. The price comes to about 25 paise. It is published every day of the year simultaneously from 25 cities and towns. In nine centres, it has facilities for printing from facsimile. It is distributed in China through the post offices.

The post offices open only at eight in the morning. But the post office authorities receive the paper at 4 a.m. and used to deliver copies early to us in the hotels. In Peking, with a population of 80 lakhs, the circulation of the *People's Daily* is 11 lakhs. But a single copy is read by several people.

Even the Prime Minister and other leaders of the party

and the government get the newspaper through the post office. The postal department gets 5 paise as delivery charges. Except for distinguished guests, the newspaper is not delivered at home.

I was curious to know why the news is published two or three days late. "We have several shortcomings" the newspaper men said. Technical difficulties and lack of communication facilities. "You didn't give importance to the news when Vietnam attacked your country" I said. "Yes, we don't want to disturb the people and divert their mind from their work. So we are very careful in giving out news."

The *People's Daily* has six pages. Important news is printed on the first page. Pages 2, 3 and 4 carry internal news. The international news is printed on pages 5 and 6. The attack on Vietnam was printed on page six. The newspaper mostly depends on the news agency for news.

One third of the 1400 employees in the *People's Daily* are women. "Our printing machines are old. We can increase the circulation only when we get new machines. But shortage of newsprint will yet remain as a big problem" they said.

Composing is done by hand. The Chinese language has more than a thousand characters and it is not easy to make mono or lino machines for the language. Perhaps computers could solve the problem.

An important department in the newspaper office is named "Mass workers." It gets daily more than 2000 letters from readers. "We read every one of these letters. Some are published. But the contents of others are also taken note of. The readers' letters have contributed much to the progress of the nation said the Chief of the foreign news bureau. "The letters have exposed several of our shortcomings. They are a great blessing to us as well as to the nation."

The Chief quoted two instances: A district was devastated by flood. The central government provided relief. But some of the local partymen swallowed the money. The paper got letters about the swindling. When investigated, the allegation was found to be true. "We published the letters as well as the investigation report by our correspondent. Also we printed an editorial about it drawing the attention of the Central Committee of the party. The local leaders soon found themselves

in jail."

Through another letter, it was pointed out that some party leaders lived in guest houses and rented out their house to make money. The matter was investigated by the *People's Daily* correspondent, and the culprits are being booked. Prison cells now await those leaders.

Citing these two examples, the Editor said: "if the party leaders err, people could bring them to the attention of the authorities through letters. The authorities take action in every case. We are thus serving the cause of people's democracy."

"Could you follow these democratic norms during the Cultural Revolution?" His reply reminded us about our own Emergency: Editors were sacked, writers were punished and the whole propaganda was directed to create the personality cult of the leaders. "We are ashamed to say it, but the decade brought a bad name to our paper."

"And what did you do then?" we asked."

"I was not well, I availed my leave and stayed at home." His reply made us laugh.

When the whole country was in deep sorrow over the death of Chou En-lai, the *People's Daily* published editorials on educational reforms. The names of those who wrote against such callousness of the paper, were given to the police. The letters were thrown into the waste paper basket. When the newspaper employees protested everyone, including the Editor, was sacked. The *People's Daily* became an instrument in the hands of counter-revolutionaries. But the readers continued writing. They wrote that it had been turned into a Goebbelsian newspaper. These who wrote the letters were sent to jail.

The Chief of the Foreign Bureau spoke also about the salary of journalists. It was not much. The Chief Editor got double the amount of the lowest paid employee. The wages of others were not more than that of a skilled worker.

Do you notice the posters appearing on the Democracy Wall? "Yes, we have even written editorials about it. Such expression of free thought is necessary for the health of a democracy, and constructive suggestions should be encouraged."

The functioning of the *People's Daily* as the mouthpiece of

the party and the state was worth watching. The *People's Daily* was an object lesson in how a newspaper served the cause of a party and propagated the government's ideas. But despite everything, it was also true that chinks appeared, through which the people too could give vent to their feelings to some extent. The columns of *People's Daily* did serve a marginal function.

Two Days before my departure to China, I read an interesting bit of news: As in the West, in China too dancing and discotheques were becoming a craze among the youth and Chinese girls waited for foreign partners in these dancing places. This information injected much enthusiasm in the Indian newsmen who had been reconciled to a dull officially conducted tour.

There was a big signboard in front of the hotel where we stayed in Peking. "Come, join and enjoy" beckoned the board and gave details of the dancing place. The entry fee was 10 Yuan—almost ten per cent of the monthly income of the average Chinese. For the foreign tourists—not for us Indians—the amount was Paltry, but the Chinese could not think of spending such a large amount for an entertainment lasting an hour or so. There were other reasons too why the Chinese did not frequent such places.

We did not have much difficulty in locating the place and we wanted to know how wide China was opening her doors to let in foreign cultures.

First the news and now the signboard led some of us to think that China too had allowed its youth to wallow in permissiveness as in the West. We thought the authorities would not stand in the way of youth having a gay time and giving public expression to their natural feelings. It was also interpreted as an example of increasing American influence on China. However after spending some time in those dancing places, we found that such conclusions were entirely wrong.

"It is necessary to popularize dances. But it is essential to understand that no fun at the cost of work would be all-



The emphasis was on *but*. When more young people were dragged into the dance craze, the authorities sounded a warning note. Attendance in the place of dancing dropped.

When we reached the dancing place, we found no girls waiting for foreigners. There were very few Chinese inside. Except two or three Chinese girls, all others were foreigners. Unlike in the parlours of the West, there were neither nude women nor wine flowing. There was an orchestra that blared out rock music. But those who swung to its tunes were overseas Chinese and tourists. The dance provided some entertainment to the foreigners in Peking where no other kind of night life existed.

One of our party invited a Chinese girl, who was sitting at a table, to dance with him. She smiled charmingly but politely refused. After sometime she was found dancing with a Chinese boy. They danced for a short while and returned to their seats.

Dances are held in college hostels but these do not burst into boisterous merrymaking or cross the boundaries of Chinese decency. Even then such entertainments are not allowed to interfere with one's work and duty.

A doctor from Andhra Pradesh studying acupuncture in Peking invited two nurses for a dance and promised to pay their entrance fee to the disco. They did not refuse but excused themselves several times giving one reason or other. The Chinese are reluctant to be free with foreigners. They know the limits of the freedom allowed to them.

A Canadian journalist, who had spent some time in China had an interesting story to tell. After being six months in the sea, a ship from the German Democratic Republic anchored in a Chinese port. The Chinese naval officers warmly received their German counterparts. The Germans wanted to have a dance in the evening. The Chinese promised to make all arrangements. The floor, the band and the music were ready. The Germans came all dressed up for the dance. The band began playing. The Chinese officers politely told the Germans to dance. But there was not a single girl there. The enraged Germans ran amuck and broke everything around. But the Chinese took it in their stride.

A friend among us used to complement the Chinese girls

exclaiming 'you are beautiful.' But the girls paid no heed and turned their face. Our interpreter explained that in China girls were not flattered by such complements. Also they could not be enticed by invitation to tea or dance. Generally they are reluctant to be familiar with foreigners. Except for some overseas Chinese, no foreigners were able to fall in love and marry Chinese girls.

'Massage' is a pretext for prostitution in many foreign countries and even some of the Indian cities. In the hotel we stayed, there was a board: "Visit the parlour at 10th floor for good massage." One of us went up there after paying 10 Yuan. He was laid on a cot in his underclothes and a sheet was put on him. A middle aged man massaged him over the sheet. However, Chinese massage is as good as Chinese medicine for preserving health and youthful vigour.

A friend of mine believed there would be pliable women in China too as everywhere else. He tried his theory on a girl when he was alone with her. But the girl retreated, after a warm embrace and returned the present he gave her. Where could she take it? What would she reply if someone asked her from where she got it? My friend still believes that it was this fear that made her return his gift. But it is more probable that they except love only in return for love; that too from their own countrymen.

Wang, the interpreter, who accompanied us to Peking University said that he had almost completed translating Thakazhi Shivasankara Pillai's famous novel "Two measures of rice." But the manuscript fell into the hands of the "Cultural revolutionary" and was destroyed. Many such great works of art and literature were destroyed during the Cultural Revolution. Several plays and operas were banned. It was a time when Mao's fourth wife, Madam Chiang Ch'ing, was in full control of the cultural scene. The Chinese opera music was replaced by full-throated revolutionary songs, which were merely political slogans. In the language of the leaders of the Cultural Revolution, all the weeds and poisonous plants were removed from China's cultural field.

However, gradually the Cultural Revolution was compelled to give way to the new leadership and its ideas. After the Gang of four was overthrown, the breeze of liberalization

started blowing into the suffocated cultural life. The suppressed emotions have found an outlet and it is natural that now the youth revelled in their new found freedom. But the Chinese know the limit and restrain themselves. Encouraging dances and draw in the reins at the first signs of excess, are all part of the new Chinese policy of limited liberalization.

Many of the literary works and plays, that were weeded out as poisonous, have now been accepted as elevated and restored to their original position. When China freed itself from the clutches of Cultural Revolution, many literary giants of the past including Confucius came into vogue with greater renown.

The officials of the Foreign Ministry accompanied us during the first lap of our tour, which ended at Canton. Later, officials of the Department of South Indian studies (Peking University) were our guides. One of them was an important office-bearer of the Communist Party and spoke about many national and international matters. The Foreign Ministry officials had given us their address and phone numbers, but we could not contact them after they left us. They mixed with foreigners only when it was officially necessary. Once their duty is over, they become almost untraceable.

As in Soviet Russia, in China too there are no telephone directories. The authorities contend that only those whose numbers are known to you should be called. One cannot pester people by making unnecessary calls.

In China, now people enjoy the freedom to speak and travel. But the officials restrict their talk to mere official matters. A friend asked a beautiful girl working in the telegraph office if he could visit her house for a talk. "You could talk to me here" she said politely. The reticence on the part of the Chinese to mingle with foreigners is evident everywhere. Are they afraid of being watched?

Recently there has been a growing awareness in China about human rights. We saw some posters relating to it. However, it is pointed out that in a socialist country, the meaning and range of human rights are different. When the state itself is engaged in building a society in which the human rights of all people will be protected, individual liberties will have to be

restricted. So the Chinese authorities, as all communists in power, say that the demand for human rights should not clash with the working of the state.

Individual freedom and many other freedoms find a prominent place in the Chinese Constitution. On reading the Chinese Constitution one will find it quite acceptable. But there are articles in the Constitution itself that put limitations on those freedoms. And those restricting the freedom are not merely to be used during an emergency. These are in force at all times and remain an inseparable part of the Constitution: All are bound to support the communist party and its leadership. Since one is bound to obey this order and the power to make people obey this order is vested with the government, many of the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution become ineffective. Even at a time when a hundred thoughts were encouraged, personal freedom did not exist. During the Cultural Revolution even this limited freedom was destroyed. It dampened the enthusiasm of the intellectuals. Though the situation has changed much now, the Chinese authorities as well as the people have an idea as to how far one can stretch freedom and human rights.

As elsewhere in the world, the youth in China too are somewhat restive. They give vent to their feelings through protests. A few months ago, some youngsters lay on the railway track as a sort of Satyagraha. But there is no possibility of these protests flaring up under the present circumstances. A poster saying "It is necessary to change the political system if China is to be modernized" appeared only once. The Chinese leadership will not allow the socialist edifice built through a protracted revolution to be dismantled.

Confucius may be rehabilitated, new flowers may bloom and new ideas may be tested. There may never occur another Cultural Revolution. But the outside wind that rushes in through the newly opened windows of China, will not be allowed to blow off the decor inside. No leadership will allow the Chinese social atmosphere to be polluted from outside. The Chinese may be allowed to see what happens in the outside world, but they will also be required to protect their own

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nal interference. Even now a section of the Chinese leadership fear that they have opened their doors too wide. The latest reports say that there is rethinking on modernization and liberalization.

The most impressive achievement of the People's Republic of China is in the field of education. Prior to 'liberation' (October 1949) few could read and write; only the affluent could afford education for their wards. The government set out to teach all people to read and write and build new schools. To achieve its aims, it reduced both the number of Chinese characters used in print and the number of strokes in writing the characters. It also built a number of schools all over China. The children of the peasants and workers were induced to attend these schools. As a result illiteracy has declined by more than 50% and Primary school education has become almost universal.

The vast expansion in Primary school education, the shortage of school buildings, and increase in the number of children from the working classes seeking education in the Middle schools has put severe pressure on Middle school education. Consequently the large number of less talented children do not go beyond lower Middle school level; instead they are sent to work in farms. Even then, the number of children seeking admission to upper Middle school is so large that opportunities for acquiring it are dwindling year by year.

The modern state controls every aspect of its citizens' life either directly or indirectly. It does so through an army of functionaries and a highly complicated chain of command stretching from the Head of the state to the mass of people at the base. By virtue of their position, the functionaries become a favoured or privileged class. To perpetuate their privileges, they set up and patronize special or elitist educational institutions for giving their children the kind of education that will

enable them to remain in the favoured class.

China is an omnipotent state. It has greater need for this special class of people. Further, in China education has traditionally been the ladder to success.

Mao Tse-tung asserted on February 27, 1957: 'Not to have a correct political point of view is like having no soul..... Our educational policy must enable everyone who gets an education to develop morally, intellectually and physically and become a cultured socialist-minded worker.' Following him, Lu Ting-yi, a member of the politburo echoed:

'Our state is a proletarian dictatorship, a socialist state. Our education is not bourgeois, but socialist education..... The educational policy of the Chinese Communist Party has always been that education should serve the politics of the working class and be combined with productive labour; and to apply this policy, education must be led by the Communist Party . . . We believe there are only two kinds of knowledge in this word one is knowledge of the class struggle..... The other kind of knowledge is the knowledge of the struggle for production, that is, the knowledge men gain in their struggle against nature.....The philosophy of dialectical materialism provides men with a correct way of thinking.'

Thus it appeared to me that the reduction in the opportunities for acquiring Middle School education, the aspirations of the favoured governing class for its children and the ideology of the Chinese Communist Party were in conflict. So when I set out for China, I decided to find out answers to the three questions that had puzzled me:

1. Is there such a favoured governing class in China?
2. Does this class patronize special or elitist educational institutions?
3. What has the government done to carry out the party's ideology with regard to education?

On reaching China, I found out that there exists in China such a privileged class and there are such schools for their children and what is more that even during the Cultural Revolution when schools were closed and students and teachers were sent to the villages and farms to work, these schools for the

privileged few went on.

"We are poor economically as well as in technical expertise. So there are only a few special schools in China. The education the students get here is imparted to many others by them. It is necessary for us to send more able and intelligent students for higher education."

Mao had said that class differences would remain for hundred years after revolution. That was why even during the Cultural Revolution he had blessed the 'special schools' and nurtured the 'Brahmin' class to rule over China.

However, class divisions were not noticed when we visited a nursery school. The privileges begin at middle school stage. The middle school course is for five years—three in junior and two in senior classes. Students are selected for the senior class after a competitive examination. Only those students who are outstanding are eligible for higher education.

"We welcome the uncles who are visiting us. The uncles should love nephews; and nephews should respect uncles." With this speech the six year old 'leader' welcomed us to the kindergarten school. The habit of teaching the children to call everyone 'uncle' is very much prevalent in China too.

It is not compulsory for children in the nursey school to wear uniforms. So among a people drably dressed, these children look colourful. The children are neither shy nor selfish. Being with other children most of their time their character moulds at a tender age.

The school had arranged a cultural programme for our benefit. There was a message in the ballet played by children of the age group of one to seven years. A rabbit began cultivating his land alone. He was caught by a wolf. Other rabbits joined to rescue the victim. They killed the wolf. "If you stand united, you can defeat your enemy." The message was not merely "unity is strength."—Unite and face the enemy!

In the end, the six-years-old leader made another speech to thank us. "We love our country. We love our Chairman Hua..." Paying obeisance to personality begins at infancy. Later we heard a song also praising Hua. "Hua will lead us," they sang. In China too there was the unmistakable '*janagana-mana adhinayakaism!*'

However, it is worth watching and understanding how

young children are cared for in China. Generally communist countries show great interest in the upbringing of children. For them, the children are the future not only of their country but also of the communist ideology.

The attitude is "children are the wealth of the state." Since everyone goes to work, the children are sent to nursery schools. Children whose parents have to be on night duty regularly, will be provided with boarding facilities in the nursery school. Others can keep their children in the nursery from 7 a.m. to 6 p.m. The children are taught games, story-telling and drawing. Also they study to count and how to behave. The teaching system cannot be classified as Montessorian or anything similar. But it is an effective system. We visited several nursery schools and all of them were equally good. This facility, that can be availed of by only the rich in India, is available even to the children of farm and factory workers in China.

We visited No. 1 Primary Experimental School in Peking. The school was established 67 years ago and its Headmistress is 73. She could have retired, "But I can't leave this institution to which I have life-long emotional attachment." They were experimenting with reforms in Primary Education. The period of classes, teaching aids and the method of instruction were all subject to critical assessment. The school which was earlier affiliated to Peking University is now under the Bureau of Education. The reports of experiments and recommendations are sent to the Bureau. "We recommended a five-year course instead of the six years, and it was accepted," said Madam Shen Maling, the Headmistress.

The school has 80 teachers, 18 classes and 737 students and worked in two shifts i.e. from 8 to 12 a.m. and 1.30 to 3 p.m. Chinese language, music, general science and arithmetic are taught upto class III. From class III, English and other subjects are taught. New Mathematics, the bugbear of Indian children and parents, is not taught here even as an experiment. Television and tape recorders are used as teaching aids.

In China, teachers have an organization. Transfers are rare. The school authorities are consulted before any transfer is effected. There are some teachers who work in two schools. They get special bonus on the recommendation of the school

committee and district committee of the Communist Party. Experienced and eligible teachers are nominated as members of the Municipal Congress.

During the Cultural Revolution, a 12 year old school girl wrote a letter to the *People's Daily* describing teachers as a class of counter-revolutionaries. She said they belonged to the 'foul old nine.' Imperialists, feudal lords, agents of the enemy and intellectuals belonged to the 'foul old nine.' Also the capitalist-roaders. The present Vice-Premier Mr Teng was described as a capitalist-roader. When a special school had come under the onslaught of Cultural Revolution, its Headmaster was assigned the task of sweeping the floor. It was impossible to antagonize the majority of students and young teachers. "I had to subject myself to self-criticism," said Madam Ling. "I could not blame them. Were we not in a country under the leadership of Mao?" Now the Gang of Four is being blamed for all those excesses.

"The students are not beaten, but they are punished," said a teacher of a middle school in Wuhan. Mostly the students are corrected by speaking to their parents. In rare cases one is suspended. "However students' discipline is not a problem as it used to be before." 'Before' means during the Cultural Revolution.

Yuvan Phu has been a Principal for the past 22 years. The school, he heads has a strength of 1800 students and is functioning since 28 years. There are 178 teachers in the school. The seniormost teachers get a salary of 96 Yuan. The school charged every student a small fee. In the junior classes, the fee was three Yuan for six months and in senior classes three and a half Yuan. Those who are financially handicapped are not only exempted from fees but also are assisted in buying books and school uniform.

The text books were the same everywhere. English was taught from the very beginning. Lately Japanese too has been included in the curriculum.

It was interesting to hear a conversation between a teacher and a primary school student.

Teacher: Do you learn English?

Student: Yes.

Teacher: Do you learn Russian?

Student: No. I do *not* learn Russian.

The 'not' was very much emphasized. I felt it was not only English that was being taught but also basic politics' of China.

When we went to visit another school, we found a big banner at the gate "Welcome to the Friends from India. Long live India-China friendship." On the way back my shoe was damaged. I gave it for repair to a way-side cobbler. He had a machine to make stitches on the shoe. By the time the shoe was repaired, a crowd had gathered around. They had not seen an Indian before. Seeing us they were happy. It showed that the banner displayed at the schoolgate was not a mere a formality.

We visited the Sun Yat-Sen University in Canton and the Peking University. The Asia Study Group in Peking University wanted us to talk to the research scholars. I did not know how to make exhortations and political speeches, so agreed to talk to them informally. They wanted to know many thing about India—the caste system, Morarji-Charan Singh feud, oppression of Harijans, land legislation of Kerala and other matters. Listening to their questions, one could understand that they had enough knowledge of the subjects and were eager to know more.

A colleague of mine while giving out statistics of food production in India inflated the figure by 10,000 lakh tonnes. But a Chinese scholar corrected him quoting the previous week's Economic Times. Hastily my friend started telling about nuclear reactors. They know all about our production statistics.

The Vice-Chancellor of Peking University, Professor Shi is a noted scholar. He was translating *Ramayana* into Chinese. He had already translated *Shakuntalam*. The previous year, he had visited India as amember of a goodwill mission. It was a pleasure to talk to the learned man.

The Sun Yat-Sen University, established in 1924, is one of the important universities in China. It was being expanded to give instruction to 2000 post-graduates and 10,000 students. At present it has 5000 students on its rolls. There were five departments for natural sciences and humanities. Some thirty-five specialists taught there.

The vacation was five weeks a year—three in winter and two in summer. A fee was charged from students but those who could ill afford it were granted concessions upto 75 per cent. Entrance was through a competitive test and one had to obtain at least 70 per cent marks for admission.

In China, Vice-Chancellors and other learned dons are paid well. The Vice-Chancellor of Sun Yat-sen University is paid 400 Yuan. Other teachers get on an average 90 Yuan.

The Cultural Revolution wrought havoc on university education. "The more one acquired cultural knowledge, the more he becomes a counter-revolutionary" said Chiang tee Shen, a leader of the Cultural Revolution, and sent professors and students to the fields. "Study from the society and oppose teaching through books," "End all examinations" were some other slogans. The University campuses were deserted. The students who were admitted without an entrance test, returned blank answer papers in the examinations. Wherever there were protests, police interfered.

The Cultural Revolution made education topsy-turvy. The teachers stood for revolution, so they should sit with students and discuss, and conduct mutual criticism. Political consciousness was the criterion to get marks. "Which is heavier, aluminium or copper?" If the student wrote "copper is essential for national defence," he got full marks. Of course now things have changed. Education is now back on its feet. The stress is to impart knowledge and make students conscious of their duty towards society.

The ten year long Cultural Revolution created a generation of uneducated. Some of the revolutionaries are engineers and doctors now. They are made to undergo refresher courses and rehabilitated. The sudden return of those who were compulsorily sent to the villages, too posed problems.

During our tour, we visited the medical college and the hospital at Canton. The college has a strength of 500 students and has five hospitals under it. The course here too is of five years duration. Several of those doctors who had obtained 'degrees' during the Cultural Revolution were studying here in their spare time. The rush in the outpatient department reminded me of our own hospitals.

Veneral diseases have been completely wiped out from



China. However, as in the capitalist system, cases of heart troubles were increasing. Medical assistance is free. A small fee is charged for beds in the hospital. The hospital has 1200 doctors and 2000 beds.

The Chinese have tried to integrate allopathy with their native medical system. They use a lot of traditional drugs extracted from medicinal plants. They have perfected the use of moxibustion (burning of cones of wormwood leaves on designated anatomical spots), and developed methods to purify insulin and new techniques in anaesthetic surgery. Acupuncture, the system of treating by pin-pricks, is highly advanced and is used in treating such dreaded diseases as cancer. The integration of various medical systems has proved most effective in fighting diseases.

During the Cultural Revolution, recommendation was the main criterion for selection. Now a candidate has to pass a competitive examination and also should possess aptitude for medical profession. The doctors are paid well. Private practice is not allowed. The Director of the hospital has been working there for the past 20 years.

China is highly advanced in orthopaedics. The Chinese doctors are experts in "accident repair." They join severed limbs. We visited an orthopaedic centre in a town called Shih-Chia Chuang. A boy with a fractured leg was convalescing there. Seeing us, he began performing physical feats and acrobatics. "The exercises are necessary for fast healing," the doctor explained. While returning from the visit we saw the same doctor in workman's clothes pushing a hand-cart full of fertilizers. The doctors and physically able patients worked in spare time to grow vegetables. Doctors and nurses do not feel it inferior to their dignity to do 'menial' jobs. They bathe patients and help them in all respects. Seeing the doctor pushing the handcart, my friend looked askance. "Was it a farce enacted for our benefit?" It was not.

In addition to these medical specialists, there are about 1.3 million 'bare-foot' doctors or semi-professional peasant physicians for simple ailments, treatment and distribution of contraceptives. At regular intervals mobile teams of doctors and nurses visit the countryside.

In short, China has evolved an educational system suitable

or its society. The Chinese have a clear perception as to what type of education should be imparted to the growing generation.

The Chinese leaders declare that war is inevitable. They think a third world war is in the offing and see world developments in that light. Some ten years ago, when there were border clashes between Russia and China, Chairman Mao exhorted the Chinese to build underground shelters to save themselves from enemy attacks. China's attitude has always been to be ready for self-defence.

Mao's call was soon translated into action. Those days his words were unquestionable. Construction of underground shelters began everywhere in China.

Today the Chinese can protect themselves from the fury of the bomb in underground shelters and continue their work uninterrupted. Even under a nuclear attack, three fourth of the Chinese population can survive. China is the only nation with such a great defence capability against the atom bomb.

Everywhere, in schools and colleges in shopping centres and factories, there are underground shelters. The existence of the marvellous network of shelters has to be seen to be believed.

We visited a large underground shelter in Peking. These are generally shown to foreign visitors. "To Russians too?" "No, Russian social imperialists will not be allowed to see them." It seems that the Chinese were eager to show the shelters to foreigners. Chou is said to have told them to let foreigners see how China was taking precautions to face the 'third world War.'

The underground shelter we saw belonged to big machine tool factory in Peking. It was a for the first time Indian newsmen were seeing it, our interpreter told us. "I have worked for

making a shelter for my office," he added. Everyone, irrespective of their position and rank, had to work for 15 days in a year for the construction of underground shelters. They had to dig, carry basket loads of soil and had to do all sorts of manual work.

"There are underground shelters in your hotel and the adjacent shopping centre. It is not generally shown to guests. But the hotel staff know the entrance to the shelters", our guide told us.

Within a year of Mao's appeal to make the hideouts, the Machine tool factory constructed its shelter. The officer-in-charge of security against air raids, Mr. Ten, took us to his office and explained through charts the layout of the shelter. We were asked to keep our cameras on the table and then Ten unveiled a large layout plan.

There were tunnels on all the four sides of the factory. They were wide enough for four men to walk abreast. There were twenty entrances to the tunnels from all sides of the factory. The 2000-metre long tunnels are lined with reinforced concrete walls. Within five minutes of an air raid warning, all the 2800 employees of the factory would be inside the protective tunnel.

It would take more than two hours to walk through the tunnels. We saw only important places and even that took us half an hour.

There were all facilities inside the underground shelter. It was not just a temporary shelter from air-raid, but a duplicate factory underground. There were generators, telephone exchange, wireless sets, a kitchen, a record room, hospital, first aid centre, wells and water supply lines. Apart from living facilities, there was also a workshop where employees could continue with their jobs.

The underground shelter was not an isolated place of escape. All the tunnels in the city were connected to one another; in short there was a parallel underground Peking. There were huge air filters and inlet fans fitted to the tunnels. Even if an atom bomb fell on Peking, the air in the 'underground' city would not be contaminated.

The tunnels had two floors and there were lifts connecting  
ements to store grains and other

food-stuffs underground.

"Will it not be cold here in winter?" we asked. No. In the summer the cold air from inside is supplied to the factory. So it would not be as cold as outside during winter.

The tunnels can withstand a ten ton impact. The shelters were a great blessing during the earthquake that devastated Peking three years ago.

There is no censorship of films in China, so no censor board. If the officials of the Film Studio agreed upon the production of a film, they can go ahead. However, if any one official opposed the film, it would have to be passed by higher authorities. But there were rare cases of such reference to outside authority. The studio committee comprising of the director, deputy director, scenario writers and representatives of the artists and technicians, association, jointly passed film projects.

During of the Cultural Revolution, the film had to be passed by the provincial authorities and the Department of Cultural Affairs. But those days are over now.

We visited a film studio in Canton. It was almost like a factory. There was neither the glamour nor the rush one saw in a film studio in India. There was a woman among the officials who received us. She was good looking but was dressed in the usual worker's uniform. We became aware of her being an actress only when the studio director informed us. Just like any other employee, she worked as a 'heroine' in the studio!

There were staff writers in the studio who wrote stories for the films. Some stories are accepted from outside also. The studio director had the authority to select stories. He was a 'responsible official.'

Let not the reader imagine that the studio turned out a hundred films a year. This is China. In the whole of China a hundred films are not produced annually. In the previous year the studio had produced only 5 films. There were altogether seven studios in China to cater to 4000 million viewers.

"Star-value" is unheard of in China. There are no Jayabharathis and Seemas here. One could only hear of experienced actresses. Every studio had actors and actresses on the

staff. A film became popular not because of its star value but because of its content, the director told us.

Some 30 actors and actresses were employed in the studio. The director gets a salary of above Rs. 1000/-. Considering China's living standards, it is a good sum. The highest salary is Rs. 2000/-. An experienced actress is paid upto Rs. 1000/-. But a 'new face' gets only Rs. 400/-. There is no 'extras' in China. Sometimes persons from outside the trade are asked to work temporarily. But then they are paid an amount equal to their wages in their actual profession.

A colour film would cost around Rs. 30 lakhs. China produced raw colour film and also imported Eastman colour films.

It takes some 8 months to complete a film. The first copy is shown to the state-owned film distributing company which determined the number of copies to be made depending on the merit and expected popularity of the film. Once the copies are handed over to the distributing company, the studio's responsibility is over.

Films are shown to critics, writers and literary men to evaluate entertainment and artistic values. Their opinions are taken note of. There is a film institute in Peking to train youngsters in various aspects of film-making.

There are no awards in China. But if a film is accepted by the people (if it becomes a box office success) the director and actors get bonus. Educational and scientific films are made with the cooperation and guidance of the related institutions.

Before producing a film, the budget for it is estimated and the deficit is made up by loans from state authorities. The loans are repaid when the studio gets paid by the distributing company. Here shooting of a film is never started on a deficit budget.

We were shown around the studio. There were three floors for indoor shooting. Outdoor shooting was rare. The facilities in the studio were not quite modern.

Some of the 'stars' stayed inside the studio compound which had an area of 17,000 square metres. Most of the 1000 'acting' employees worked in that studio only and did not go to act in films produced by other studios.

The studio was another factory or production unit to pro-

duce films to further the cause of communist ideology. It was no glamour palace of gorgeous stars.

The employees in the studio had heard of Indian films. *Awara* and *Do bigha Zamin* are now being shown in China. Mrinal Sen films too have reached China. The Chinese like Charlie Chaplin films.

Cinema has yet to grow as a modern visual art in China. It has a bright future in the new atmosphere of liberalization and modernization.

The Government operates about 1000 radio stations and 40 television centres. Broadcasts reach the people over loudspeakers and TV sets are located at spots where the public gather. There are about 500000 television receivers in China.

In China there is a memorial to an Indian, Dr. Kotnis, who had devoted his life to the service of the Chinese people. Even today the Chinese remember him with love and gratitude. The memorial has stood the test of time outliving wars and estranged relations between India and China.

Dr. Kotnis had gone to China at the behest of the Indian National Congress. A five member medical team including Dr. Kotnis was sent by Jawaharlal Nehru to China to render medical aid to the victims of China-Japan war. Later Dr. Kotnis joined Mao's forces and fought against the imperialists and became a martyr.

"Kotnis and I have worked together like brothers. Being his brother, you are my brother also", wrote Mao in a letter he had sent to Dr. Kotnis' brother after the doctor's death in China.

Mao and Nehru are no more. Even while they were alive India and China drifted apart. But China yet cherishes the memory of Dr. Kotnis. "We will never forget those who have helped us." The words of Mao inscribed on the memorial, welcomed us.

There is a memorial to Dr. Kotnis in Shih-chia-chuang town in the provinces of Hopeh. Also there is a Kotnis Memorial Hall in the Dr. Norman Bedune Memorial Hospital. The hospital was built to honour the Canadian doctor who also had served and died in China. In the Kotnis Hall, there are pictures of various facets of Kotnis short life (he died at 32)

devoted to China. Dr. Kotnis was the first director of Dr. Norman Memorial Hospital.

It is essential for every Indian who visits China to see this memorial. Looking at it, one forgets the political differences between the two countries and feels the age-old friendly relations between two great peoples of the world.

We started from Peking to Shih-chia-chuang, the capital of Hopeh province. The Journey took three hours and a half. Shih-Chia-Chuang is an important military centre of the North.

In the centre of the town there is a big garden. It is a memorial to the martyrs who fell fighting in Yunan. Dr. Kotnis was buried in this garden and his memorial carries the Mao message: "We have friends all over the world." The simple memorial carries a small description of Kotnis' service to the Chinese nation. Near to the Kotnis memorial, there is another one to the memory of Dr. Adal, a member of the Kotnis medical team. Though Dr. Adal had returned to India, he died while he was on a visit to China later.

It was in 1951 that the Chinese decided to build the memorial to Kotnis. It was completed in three years. Every year some seven lakh people visit this memorial park. The local people are not allowed to use the park as a picnic spot. The authorities said that restrictions are necessary to maintain the sanctity of the place. The photographs and urns containing ashes of several martyrs are kept here. There is also a picture of Dr. Kotnis' son who had died twelve years ago. The young man who too was studying to be a doctor had sacrificed his life for the country. (Kotnis' Chinese wife still works in a hospital. She had visited Kotnis' home in Sholapur some time ago.

It was in 1937, the Indian National Congress decided to send the medical team to China. Two of its members Dr. Basu and Dr. Mukherjee, are still alive. In the Kotnis memorial hall of the hospital, there are several pictures of Kotnis from the time of the voyage of his team to his martyrdom in China. There is also a big statue of Kotnis at the entrance of the hall.

The documents exhibited in the hall include a copy of the resolution of the Indian National Congress, the letters sent by Kotnis to his colleague Dr. Basu who returned to India and the



letter written by Mao to Kotnis' brother.

Then there is the long pictorial story of Kotnis' activities in China. Kotnis attending to patients, marching to the front, joining the Communist Party, treating battle casualties, operating on comrades wounded in war and teaching others to be doctors. The hard and incessant work had drained his energy. Disregarding the advice to take rest, the emaciated doctor continued his work and succumbed to epilepsy. "Kotnis was our 'black' mother," a doctor in the hospital told us. (The 'white' mother was the Canadian doctor, Norman Bedune).

Dr. Kotnis reached China in 1938 and died, at the age of 32, in 1942. In a short period of four years he was able to earn the love and respect of the whole country.

As far as the Chinese are concerned, Kotnis remains an eternal symbol of friendship. They will ever remember him and the memorial to him is the testimony of that freindship. The fluctuations in India-China relations will not affect the feelings of the Chinese towards Kotnis. For, the great service rendered to China by the young Indian, is embedded in the peoples' hearts. India may forget Kotnis; but never will China

"Once this city too was like Calcutta," said our interpreter while we were hearing Shanghai. "We have completely removed the vestiges of that pathetic past. Only Whangpoo River and some monuments of historical value are there as witnesses to this radical change."

Lenin had predicted that communism would enter the world through Shanghai and Calcutta. One cannot pass a verdict on Calcutta, but Shanghai was really a centre of the communist revolution and played a decisive role in changing China; and Shanghai has many stories to tell—of protests and suppression, of the transformation of a neglected population into front-line troops of the Chinese Revolution.

Like Calcutta, the port city of Shanghai too was the centre of imperialist intrigues. It grew into a focal point of exploiters, smugglers, murderers and pedlars of pornography. The Europeans who landed as paupers made fortunes in slave-running and making the natives work like machines after numbing their senses with opium. Having a Chinese cook became a symbol of class among western aristocracy. Offering Chinese girls to guests became a fashion among the white men.

Shanghai became one of the biggest business centres of the world with the largest human and material resources for exploitation at the disposal of the imperial powers.

There used to be a board at the entrance to the beautiful triangular garden of the former British Embassy: "Dogs and Chinese are not allowed here." The whites thought that the Chinese were fit only to be menials, to launder clothes and polish shoes. No wonder the fight for the emancipation of man's dignity started in this decadent city.

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in Canton on the eve of leaving China was also arranged in a similar guest house. It resembled a gathering of feudal aristocrats than that of communist comrades.

In Shanghai, we saw the Shanghai Exhibition Hall. One look at its facade is enough to realize that it is a post liberation structure built during the heady days of Sino-Soviet friendship. The influence of the Russians is unmistakable. The facade has intertwined and patterned columns, 'ginger bread' turrets, Neoclassic colonnades and a soaring steeple. All that it lacks in the well-known Russian Onion dome. But the borrowed finery is confined to the exterior. The interior is typically Chinese with its simplicity and austerity. On entering the main hall, one is drawn straight to the huge white marble statue of Mao, set in bold relief by the red backdrop, flags and thoughts embossed in letters of gold. The striking effect is further enhanced by the vast, high, bare vaulted ceiling resembling an airplane hanger. Mao's message 'go all out, aim high, produce more, faster, better and more economically' forms the theme of the exhibition where all machinery and other products manufactured in China are exhibited.

had let lose its fierce oppression and naked exploitation. No wonder the working class of Shanghai with the support of the intellectuals became the vanguard of Chinese Revolution.

It was here (Shanghai), that the first meeting of the Chinese communist party was held in 1921. It was from here Chiang Kai-shek waged his war to eradicate communism. It was from here that Chiang had fled in the disguise of a fisherman, when the city was surrounded by revolutionary forces. A small American trawler was waiting in Shanghai harbour to take him Formosa.

Later the notorious Cultural Revolution too started from Shanghai. Of late, Shanghai has been the centre for the crusade against the Cultural Revolutionists. Shanghai has always been the touchstone of Chinese politics. For what Shanghai thought out today, China would act out tomorrow. For this very reason Shanghai often becomes a nightmare to the rulers.

A tour of China is incomplete without visiting Shanghai. Here one can understand the Chinese character and feel the political undercurrents. A few days before we reached Shanghai, the youth there demanded freedom to grow long hair. Though after the repudiation of Cultural Revolution, there is no ban on sporting long hair, the authorities do not take kindly to the adoption of Western fashion by Chinese youth. They staged a demonstration against this attitude of the authorities when we were in China. The demonstration was peaceful but powerful and the newspapers reported it.

Shanghai is different from other Chinese cities. It somewhat reminded one of the western cities. It is a big business centre with more vehicle, traffic and shopping centres.

We stayed in a guest house in Shanghai. The place had better facilities than a five-star hotel. It was a place to accommodate top party leaders and special guests. In China, party bigwigs got special facilities as in all other communist countries. Big rooms, all modern comforts, several servants and an atmosphere of luxury and leisure. Though all are supposed to believe that "there is no substitute for simplicity and hard work," the life of the party bosses told a different tale. It is clear that rulers are exempted from the rigours of precepts in any social system. The dinner party we attended

in Canton on the eve of leaving China was also arranged in a similar guest house. It resembled a gathering of feudal aristocrats than that of communist comrades.

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On seeing the exhibits one could gauge Chinese industrial expansion—If the country could do so well without foreign aid and with the handicaps of Cultural Revolution, it could attain tremendous progress with outside aid and incentive for modernization. However, the lack of facilities in factories was not reflected in the exhibition. The art of propaganda and exhibition was something special and the Chinese were not lagging behind in it. All types of goods such as bicycles, radios and electronic equipments to heart pace-makers were exhibited there. There was a special section on acupuncture, the art of healing through insertion of needles in the 350 nerve centres of the human body. The Chinese claim that all kinds of diseases can be cured by 'needling.'

All visitors are shown the place where the first meeting of the Chinese communist party was held. It was the house of one of the earlier leaders. In the main room there is a long table with 12 chairs. Twelve tea cups were on the table. The whole place reflects simplicity and austerity. There is a picture of Mao on the wall, perhaps a recent addition. The Nation-

st authorities surrounded the place while the meeting was on, but the leaders managed to disappear. The story was narrated by our guide.

Another protected monument is the house of Sun Yat-sen, the revered father figure of China. He had come to live in the house in 1920. In every room there is a picture of his beautiful wife, Soong Chingling (Chiang Kai-shek's wife was her younger sister). Sun Yat-sen had a vast collection of books among which I found the "*Survival of Bodily Death*" in English.

While returning from the visit, I asked the Chinese friend with us: "Do your national leaders come to see these places?" No. The national leaders do not visit provincial towns. They avoid going to provincial towns and stay put in Peking. From here they transform ideology into practical schemes and keep in touch with the people. Even in Peking, the common man cannot see the leaders.

We visited several shops. Everywhere we found pictures of Mao and Chou En-lai, also a photo of Mao receiving Chou En-lai. But nowhere could we find the photo of the powerful leader Vice Premier Teng Hsiao-ping. Many people are wondering when Teng will remove the other pictures.

We walked along the bank of the River Whangpoo. The scene—Big buildings that formerly housed British business firms, the crowded harbour, lovers in embrace in the garden on the river bank—reminded us of Calcutta. Even there was a hawker of peanuts. A vehicle could pass only after sounding horn continuously.

The Cinema provided a diversion during spare time. But the theatres were crowded. During the Cultural Revolution arts and the opera were subjected to change. Plays are now being given a new orientation. A play by an old prostitute "The river that lay frozen for 3000 years had thawed and started flowing" became very popular. It meant that the Revolution had reformed and uplifted many people. Those who were on the fringe of the decadent society, have been brought into the mainstream.

Today the saying that "Chinese blood flowed slower than that of the whites" has been disproved.

Just as Shanghai stands as the symbol of Chian's political

consciousness and industrialization, the 2100-year old Hangchow is the centre of Chinese culture. There is a Chinese proverb: 'There is Heaven above and Soochow and Hangchow below' This city, abounding in scenic beauty, is situated at the beautiful range of hills called Hsi-t'ien-mushan or Eye of Heaven Mountains and by the shores of the famous Hsi Hu lake (western lake) which is surrounded on three sides by wooded hills containing temples, pagodas and sculptures. Our main aim was to see the lake in which was reflected the 'mountainpeaks that are the envoys of heaven' and the Linyo temple. Many foreign tourists reach the place to see its natural beauty and temple sculptures. There is a peak but that is said to have come from foreign lands, in the mountain ranges. Legend has it that it was a flock of eagles that had come flying from Bihar's Rajghir. There is a huge golden Buddha in the temple and the place is strewn with smaller Buddhas. During the Cultural Revolution a lot of heated discussions went on about the disposal of these statues. The extremists argued that the statues being the remnants of the feudal past, should be destroyed. The liberals fought for preserving the statues as a part of history and the great Chinese culture. It is said that Chou En-lai had to interfere to save the statues. 'The tower of harmonies' that overlooked the city for a thousand years also came under the wrath of Cultural Revolutionists. But destroying it was not possible without the help of experts and they had to abandon the war against the tower.

We saw Buddhist temples in Wuhan and Fu-shun. The statues of the 500 Buddhist monks, who had accompanied Hiuen Tsang (A.D. 600-664) from India to China, sat in different poses all around the Wuhan shrine. Those who entered the temples were mostly tourists. Few were attracted there by peity. We saw people throwing coins into the pond in front of the shrine, but that too was for fun or to test their aim rather than as an offering to the deity. Of course, there were traces of peity on the faces of some old people.

In Canton, our interpreter took leave for a day. He had gone to see his relatives. Since he worked in Peking he did not have many chances to visit his village. Family ties are still strong in China.

Though there are restrictions on going out of one province



to another in search of work, visiting relatives and spending holidays together are common among the Chinese.

During the tour, we visited a textile factory, a heavy machine factory and a small industrial establishment. China is famous for its cloth; specially the silk and the textile factories are impressive. But the heavy machine factory was almost primitive. The technology was that of the wayside workshops of Ludhiana and Jullundur. The necessity of modernization was felt when we saw the old and crude smelters and other equipments. The factory was overstaffed. Since the Chinese Constitution guaranteed employment to every citizen, for its efficient functioning. However, the overstaffing did not stand in the way of the efficiency of the factory.

On visiting a factory, one will be impressed by the welfare facilities provided for the employees. The wages were more or less equal and all had the same type of houses. The factory had a school for the children of its employee's. Employees were allowed two weeks leave. Because of family planning, no one availed of this leave more than twice. Bonus is paid on the basis of the quality as well as the quantity of one's output.

The Director of the textile factory showed us round the various departments. He had to work for a specified number of days in a year along with his workers. This enables him not to acquaint himself with his employees but also to understand their problems.

The head of the Fu-shun hydro-electric powerhouse had been with the project for the past 22 years. We were invited to his house. His house was no different from those of other employees. He had a good collection of books among which I found Kissinger's *Nuclear Policy*, Acheson's *Power and Democracy* and Hikele's *Story of the Universe*.

We visited production units of two important small scale industries: a ceramic factory and a Chinese 'Paper cuts' factory. There were specimens of Chinese sense of aesthetics and artistic expertise. In China, artists and craftsmen are highly respected and the state honours them with many awards.

We found several posters pasted over the factory walls. They were all exhortations and advices. A workers university was attached to the factory. The university ran night classes for workers could attend. The old machines of the factory,

provided by Russia and other East European countries might give way soon to more sophisticated ones imported from the West. However, it is not known who will supply the new machines, for the contracts have yet to be signed. It is to be seen whether modernization would keep pace with the West or the Chinese will prefer to evolve their own technology slowly. However, one thing is certain: the Chinese to go ahead with industrialization.

Our trip was ending. There certainly had been no time for profound discoveries. But one thing was clear, it was almost visual. China was changing. For the past three decades, China had deliberately cut herself off from the outside world, remained isolated within the four walls of her own ideology and closed her doors to the winds of change that blew from across her boundaries. But today the Chinese people, who form one fourth of the human race, are having a look around and trying to assess where they stand in a fast changing world.

Since the Chinese had to open their windows to see what is happening outside, outsiders like me got a chance to peep into China. I was specially curious to know what was happening behind the bamboo curtain. How was China coping with her problems in her effort to come up to the forefront of developed nations? How was the new desire for modernization going to affect her internal power structure as well as her ideology? The whole world is watching 'the waking of the sleeping giant.'

"The echo of the long march beginning from the foothills of Yenshal mountain ranges and the banks of the Yellow River will reverberate in the four corners of the world. In this long march we will conquer our natural resources—the sea and the mountains the rivers and the mineral deposits. We shall advance on the path of technology and science. We shall establish relations of commerce with all countries." After proclaiming this lofty aims of the new long march, China now seems to have slowed down her pace subjecting herself to rethinking. The change, of course, in midstream has made some China watchers wonder about Chinese political stability. Also

the new economic policies have come under a cloud.

"I am an old revolutionary. I have faced many storms. I have seen much of the world," Teng Hsiao-ping, the Vice Premier who is the mastermind behind China's modernization, used to say. He was a front ranker with Mao on the long March. But Mao himself had chided him as the "dead great grandfather." According to Teng, Chinese politics now needed "mental tranquility and effervescence of life." (it is implied that till now there was only turmoil and trouble.) However, many are suspicious of the policies and programmes he has made to lead China to a better morrow. Instead of moulding the diversities of China in an ideological crucible, the new leadership envisages a society that tolerates diversity. At the same time, the new leaders claim the Mao legacy. But they feel that the gains of the Revolution could not be evaluated on political basis alone but also have to be reflected in the economic progress.

It is clear that Teng and his colleagues are not leading China into a future that was envisaged by Mao. Those who have tried to find a meaning for life through Mao's thoughts for the past 30 years and the common man who was compelled to work towards that goal, are now taking to new paths. There are people who think that the ideological switch over in midstream might lead the party and its leadership into conflicts. Even among the top leadership there are differences of opinion on the immediate aims and policies to attain those aims. Prime Minister Hua Kuo-feng who had supported the Cultural Revolution and Vice Premier Teng who had been condemned several times by Mao himself, violently differ on several matters. But neither of them has a clear majority in the Politburo. If they stood together it could have been a great strength. The situation in China reminds one about the Janta Party in India. Based on these conflicts among the Chinese leadership, the Western media churn out stories of political instability in China. One has yet to see if the outward unity of Chinese leadership will continue or the conflicts will pave the way for a new leadership.

Vice Premier Teng is popular among youth, intelligentsia and technocrats. They believe his broad outlook is essential for leading China along the path of progress to the future.

developed nations. But are the Chinese to discard Mao's ideology to self reliance and development without outside help? The Chinese authorities say that the good of all systems has to be assimilated. Without throwing mud on Mao, the present leaders have removed the halo around his head. They have given a new interpretation and dimension to the Maosist ideology.

As mentioned earlier, in China Mao will never suffer the fate of Stalin. He will not be deprived of the title of 'Maker of new China.' However, Mao who had corrected himself several times will again be corrected by his followers.

Though Mao had shown magnanimity to accept his later mistakes, he did not like others to correct him. So he had been the victim of his mistakes which he could not detect. When Mao is evaluated, his early attainments as well as the later mistakes will be considered. In the ultimate balance sheet, along with the list of his great gains, the losses due to his mistakes will also be shown.

Though Mao wanted to lead China towards an egalitarian society through the Cultural Revolution, he had taken on too many human variables. The result was chaotic. Nepotism and greed of personal profit took cover behind the simulated radicalism of the Cultural Revolution. Mao's wife, Chiang Ching, elevated herself to the helm of affairs. His niece who had taken a diploma from the institute of foreign languages in 1965, was appointed as the Chief of Protocol. His nephew Lio Ning, was made the Secretary of the Provincial Revolutionary Committee.

Nepotism afflicts all man-made systems, and it was but natural that Mao was not above the evil. It is possible that he had become mentally weak due to old age and the leaders of the Cultural Revolution made him an instrument for their evil doings.

No special courts and enquiry commissions have been constituted in China to probe Mao's mistakes. But those who used Mao for selfish ends have been booked. Nobody knows where they are now. There are even people who think that they will stage a come back. But the authorities are not only vigilant against such threats but are also hunting out the collaborators of the Gang and liquidating them. At the same

time, when Mao was pictured as a dictator and fascist in a poster pasted on the Democracy Wall, the authorities opposed it. They thought such drastic measures could only help the enemies of China. However when in 1977 posters appeared welcoming the end of the Emergency *raj* in India, the authorities did not react.

It is necessary to look back while discussing the new long march and modernization. There had been thinking on the necessity of modernization even before the Cultural Revolution. The consensus was that modernization was essential for the progress of China. But it was also cautioned against the creation of a social hierarchy like that of the Soviet revisionists in Russia. An aging Mao saw a threat to his position and his village-based communes in modernization. That was why Mao gave whole-hearted support to the Cultural Revolution that opposed intellectual interference and technological modernization.

It was not for the first time in Chinese history, the rulers had waged a war against intellectuals. In the third century, an emperor had liquidated intellectuals to strengthen his position. Now after several centuries, Mao repudiated such ancient philosophers as Confucius (551-479 B.C.) to make himself the sole thinker and idol of China. Also a hundred years ago, a "self-strengthening group" had tried to bring about progress in China by adopting Western technology. They built railways and mechanized productive units. "Why is it that the small Western countries are powerful while big China is weak? Because though China was spiritually big, it did not have Western technology. Can't we use their technology without adopting their uncultured way of life?" The leaders of self-strengthening" movement had asked. Also they did adopt some of the Western ways of modernization. Today, after Mao, China is once again trying to use Western technology without exposing herself to the way of life.

Very few among the new Chinese leadership think that the craze for modernization and Western technology is a threat to Chinese ideology and way of life. Even if there are some who think so, they are in no position, as Mao could, to close the windows of China to outside world. The new leadership wants to reach a social system that Mao had envisaged thro-

ugh their own path; they want conciliation and not conflict, with Mao. Will it be possible for the modernizers to progress without upsetting the egalitarian social system that has been built up with great difficulty, at the cost of much sacrifice? When there will be huge capital investment in the cities and coastal towns and urban population start enjoying the benefits of industrialization, there is every possibility of the gap between the peasants in the rural areas and workers in the industrial cities widening. It could result in inequalities and conflicts which ultimately might lead to new revolutions. The new leadership in China is aware of such dangers; that is why they are eager to keep a balance between towns and villages in their modernization plans. Perhaps they have already taken a step back in the rapid urban industrialization by cancelling some of the technological and economic aid contracts with Western countries.

We had visited China at a crucial time when the Chinese were stepping out of their ideological coboon built around them by Mao. We met many in China, mostly common people, but also a few top leaders. It was an extraordinary gesture of goodwill on the part of Vice President Teng Hsias-ping to spare some time to talk to the visiting Indian journalists. The leader of the decade spoke to us with clarity and conviction.

Seeing the Chinese people in their varied occupations and social strata, I was convinced that whatever might be the political handicaps, they would for ever hold on to their age-old culture and tradition, their high character and human values. The common man in China is not worried about his future. They have buried many dictators in the past, and their readers are aware of this trait of the Chinese people. So they are compelled to think twice before taking each step forward.

Even while conflicts and decisive struggles are going on within the leadership, the Chinese nation as a whole, maintains its calm and unity. The problems facing China are diverse and difficult, but the people are quite capable of surmounting them.

"China is a sleeping giant. Let it sleep. For, if it wakes, it will shake the whole world", said Napoleon. China has now woken up. She is on the firm path of progress despite

from Soviet Communism and Western capitalism. Ploughing her lonely furrow, where would she reach at the end of this century? Neither her friends nor her enemies are sure of an answer.

The day before we were to return, I had sent a few questions in writing to the Chinese Vice Premier to answer. I had no hope of getting any reply, it was only a shot in the dark when I was convinced that we would not be able to meet him again.

I did not get any reply from him. Perhaps there are many questions before China that cry out for answer and my questions too had joined that long list unanswered perhaps.





